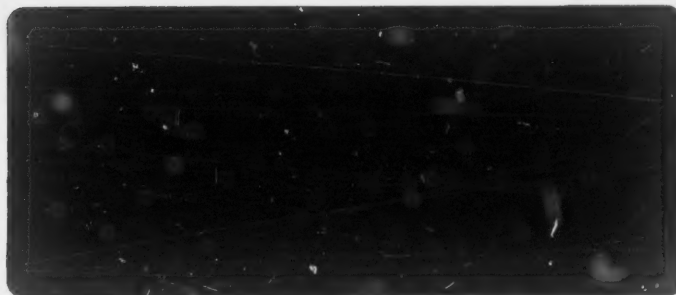


Research Report



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Newspaper Readership Project



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THE WORLD OF THE WORKING JOURNALIST

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
HIGHLIGHTS	5
NEWS AS TODAY'S JOURNALIST SEES IT	7
What Is News?	7
What and Who Shapes News Judgments?	12
Is There Consensus on What is News?	18
THE COMMUNICATION OF THE JOURNALIST -- WITHOUT AND WITHIN	23
Are Journalists Insulated from the Public?	23
What Are Causes, Effects and Solutions to Insularity?	27
How Do Journalists Communicate Within the Newsroom?	34
THE WORK ENVIRONMENT OF THE JOURNALIST	41
Who's in Charge?	41
Do Newsrooms Have a Unified News Policy?	47
How Much Conflict is There Between Supervisors and Staff?	52
Do Journalists Like their Work?	56
THE READER IN THE MIND'S EYE OF THE JOURNALIST	63
How Do People Use Media?	63
Are Readers Satisfied with Newspapers?	72
Do Newspapers Influence Readers?	75
What Do Journalists Think of Readers?	77
THE JOURNALIST AS MEDIA CONSUMER	83
What Media Do Journalists Personally Use?	83
Do They Read Professional Publications?	85
What Role for Research?	87
THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF NEWSPAPERS	95
What Image Do Journalists Hold?	95
Are Newspapers Losing Readers?	98
Do VDTs Please?	99
What Impact from "New Journalism"?	105
What Responsibility for Journalism Education?	109
WHOSE FIRST AMENDMENT IS IT: SOME COMPETING VIEWS	115

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
APPENDIX A: TECHNICAL NOTE	119
Sample and Sample Design	121
Description of Sample	121
Description of Sample Locations	122
Data Analysis Techniques	124
Sample Error	127
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE	129
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	149

INTRODUCTION

The last decade has been one of almost continuous research on the attitudes and behaviors of consumers of news. The national Newspaper Readership Project has systematically researched the reader; the larger newspaper groups have developed on-going research programs investigating predictors of readership in specific cities; individual newspapers have conducted readership studies to help guide management decision making; academics have examined readership trends.

But to date, little is known about the professional producer of news, the working journalist.

What do journalists regard as news? What shapes their news judgments? What do news people know about readers? Do they get readership research reports and do they want such research? Do they think their newspapers are keeping pace with the changing needs of readers? Are they optimistic about the future of print journalism? Do younger news people hold different attitudes about the profession than those who have been in the industry longer? Are they insulated from the public? Are journalists happy with their jobs and with the way their newspaper is managed? What professional concerns are uppermost in their thoughts?

These questions and more prompted the Newspaper Readership Project and the American Society of Newspaper Editors to sponsor jointly a study of the world of the practicing journalist. Working with the NRP research committee, researchers from Michigan State University developed two versions of a questionnaire. One was a 17-page booklet that was completed by 489 working journalists at all levels of responsibility within ten newspapers at eight separate locations. The second was an in-person interview schedule that was used in face-to-face discussions with 187 journalists at participating newspapers.

Each in-person interview was conducted by a trained member of the Michigan State University research team and lasted from one to two hours. The research team chose the people to be interviewed in depth. Some were selected because of the position they held in the newsroom. Others were selected at random to represent the views of that organization. Every employee in each newsroom was encouraged to complete the written version of the questionnaire.

The in-person interviews were recorded on audio tape with the permission of the participants. No journalist refused that request. At least two and up to six members of the research team then listened to and coded the tapes to ensure reliable coding of responses.

The primary newspapers participating in this study were The New London Day (Connecticut), The Morning News and Evening Journal (Wilmington, Delaware), The Independent and Daily Mail (Anderson, South Carolina), The Tampa Tribune (Florida), The Plain Dealer (Cleveland, Ohio), The Eagle and Beacon (Wichita, Kansas), The San Diego Union (California), and The Wenatchee World (Washington). While these newsrooms provided the main source of data for most of the conclusions drawn, a ninth newspaper agreed to serve as a pilot test for this project, The State Journal (Lansing, Michigan). Insights gained from participants in that newsroom are also included in this report.

The newspapers selected for the project were chosen by the research team to provide a broad cross-section of journalists and newspapers across the country. All of the following considerations guided selections: circulation size, market penetration, publication cycle, ownership arrangement, unionization, size of newsroom staff, geographic location, size and nature (e.g., urban v. nonurban) of the community, amount of competition from other newspapers and other media, and presence or absence of a readership committee or ombudsman. Every attempt was made to ensure that this sample reflected the range of daily

newspaper operations. All newspapers contacted by the research team agreed to participate, as did all personnel who were invited to be interviewed.

The technical appendix to this report provides a detailed description of the characteristics of the eight locations and of the respondents to the questionnaire. Of the six morning and five afternoon papers studied (including the pilot location), the smallest had a circulation of around 7000, the largest, in excess of 400,000. The smallest of the nine newsrooms had 25 employees, the largest 225. Three locations had unionized newsrooms, one had a readership committee and one had an ombudsman. Two locations had independent ownership; the remaining, group-owned papers have varying ownership histories. Market penetration ranged from less than half to nearly 90%.

Among the journalists who were surveyed, two-thirds were male. Half were under age 35. Nearly one-fourth had been in the industry less than five years, and over half had been in the industry more than 10 years; 32% were reporters, 26% held supervisory roles and the remainder included columnists, copy editors, editorial writers, photographers and cartoonists. Nearly half had held their present job for less than three years. About one-fifth had less than a college degree while 14% held a graduate degree.

These figures suggest that the newspapers and news people surveyed did include a wide range of characteristics and experiences. Given that large numbers of respondents had been in their present location a short period of time, it is also fair to conclude that impressions the journalists reported extend far beyond the nine sites where the research was conducted.

The technical appendix to this report gives more information on the sample plan, the statistical procedures and the decision rules used to develop the conclusions reported here. All data from the written questionnaire were

subjected to statistical tests and only where statistically significant (nonchance) findings were detected have conclusions been drawn. If, for example, no location differences are reported or it is stated that no such differences were found, it means that responses across locations did not differ more than they would by chance alone and that the findings therefore apply equally to all sites.

Without the help of the editors at these locations and the assistance of the editors on the research committee, it would have been impossible to undertake such a massive study. We are indeed grateful for the courtesy and assistance we received from everyone involved in this effort.

HIGHLIGHTS

- . News people say they know what makes news but can't explain it to others.
- . The predominant influences on news people's definitions of news are those people and organizations who have the most direct access to the newsroom.
- . Journalists disagree on how much agreement exists within newsrooms, and their own news priorities are at odds with what they think their newspaper's priorities are.
- . The typical news person professes a desire for more familiarity and involvement with the public but limits initiatives to do so.
- . Mobility, long working hours and an attitude that news people are different from readers contribute to journalists feeling out of touch.
- . News people enjoy talking with each other and would like to spend more time discussing their newspaper with their bosses.
- . Leadership in newsrooms ranges from laissez-faire to authoritarian, with reporters having considerable control over what gets covered.
- . Most journalists do not believe their newspaper has an identifiable or consistent news policy. Those who do are more likely to see supervisors and readers as like minds.
- . Even though a minority of journalists in nonsupervisory roles believe their supervisors are similar to them, the perceived dissimilarity doesn't translate into conflict.
- . News people like to complain about their work, but they love it even though it causes stress.
- . News people underestimate their readers' dependence on newspapers, especially for hard news, and overestimate the public's use of television and interest in fluff.
- . News people have mixed feelings about whether the public trusts the newspaper and they don't believe the public is highly satisfied with their product.
- . Journalists believe their coverage of news events substantially influences the public.
- . A majority of journalists appear to hold a patronizing and unflattering view of their readers.
- . Information suppliers are information addicts. They show high consumption of media, especially print media.
- . Journalists keep abreast of trends in public opinion by reading poll results but are much less likely to read readership research reports.

- . News people are apprehensive about the research studies that are becoming increasingly widespread in the industry. They have limited exposure to research findings, some skepticism about the validity of the procedures, and some reluctance to utilize findings in decision-making.
- . News people hold a moderately positive image of their own newspaper but are tentative about its future and public image.
- . Most journalists attribute declining readership of newspapers to the popularity of television.
- . Good computer systems make the news business more fun for all except copy editors.
- . A trend toward emphasizing style and technique over the traditional 5 W's worries editors.
- . Many journalists look back on their formal education with less than a positive attitude about those experiences. A majority want additional training.
- . In journalists' bid to become independent of political pressure and civic bias, they may be becoming elitists, risking alienation of the public they are supposed to serve.

NEWS AS TODAY'S JOURNALIST SEES IT

What Is News?

"News is what raises eyebrows."

"News is the flux of events."

"News is four things: blood, sex, war and names."

"News is what I want to write about."

-- Working journalists, 1981

News people say they know what makes news but can't explain it to others.

Both the interviews and the surveys opened by asking for the respondents' definition of news. While most quickly supplied a pat definition, many elaborated during interviews that news is difficult, if not impossible, to define. Judging news value was referred to by some as a sense a journalist either has or has not. Without this "right stuff" of journalism, the young journalist may be weeded out of the profession. The journalists we interviewed, however, were often hard pressed to articulate what distinguishes news from ordinary events.

When probed, they identified qualities, albeit vague ones, that make something newsworthy (Table 1.1). Most believed news is information with a consequence, usually defined in terms of what affects people's lives. That kind of judgment is easy, the journalists said, because important issues and events that affect their readers are readily distinguishable from those that don't. News also should be interesting and most agreed that interest is a quality inherent in the news event. Whether interest was equated with unusualness, unexpectedness, novelty or emotional impact varied greatly, however.

News also should be timely; the rest is either history or speculation. Timeliness does not imply just covering breaking events. It includes pursuing the second-day angle on stories that break just after deadline and it includes

issues and events that may have long-term impact. Timeliness translates into "current" rather than "immediate" for most journalists. For others, it means whatever has not been covered by TV or other newspapers.

Table 1.1

Major Defining Characteristics of "News" *	Percent of Responses
1. Consequence (Affect lives of readers, 16%; educate/inform readers, 7% important to reader's lifestyles or ability to cope, 5%; "should know" news; watchdog/surveillance; moral/social importance; affect status quo)	41%
2. Interest (Unknown, unusual or aberrant facts, 5%; entertaining; human interest, emotion arousing, contact with others; interest to editorial staff; people would talk about it; social norms/styles; good writing)	32%
3. Timeliness (New happenings, 7%; current happenings, 5%; new angles on events; new trends)	17%
4. Proximity (Local events other than government/politics; local government/politics; other local impact; local trends/ issues)	5%
5. Prominence (People famous for "hard news"; people famous for "soft news"; other media coverage; famous events)	2%
6. Other	3%

* These characteristics were derived from coding each journalist's definition on as many characteristics as present, up to a maximum of ten. Percentages are based on total mentions (N = 1055) across all respondents. Within categories, percentages for most frequently occurring answers are also indicated.

News is generally local, but local may be defined as that which has local impact as well as that which is geographically proximal. International developments that threaten war, for example, can be defined as local because they have consequences for the local community. That which happens nearby

is in itself also generally important. One editor summarized the relationship by noting that "interest and importance standards rise the farther away you get." When journalists weigh local versus state versus national and international news, most assign highest priority to local news, followed by regional and state news. National and international news follow both in importance, largely because the journalists believe such information is available to the reader from sources other than the local newspaper.

News is also prominent people and famous events, but again, prominence is generally related to consequence and interest. News, then, is those events and people that have impact, that are interesting and that are timely--the usual textbook answer.

But news people were quick to qualify that these dimensions cannot be used to judge the value of a news story separate from the context of the "news day." That is, newsworthiness must be judged within the context of events in the world at a given time. This distinction is important, journalists said, and is a large element in their "news sense." They and only they have access to the totality of the "news day." Therefore, the reader cannot decide what has consequence in this context. Neither can the academic researcher who searches for generalities about what is newsworthy.

Dimensions of news are not equal, said journalists. Consequence, for example, is more important than interest; the latter can be created by the writer. In the minds of many journalists, this also argues against letting audience interest dictate news, because many believe readers are not really interested in important events. "I think (what) people want to know is the more personal stuff," argued one journalist.

Far more (43%) of those interviewed stated that their responsibility is to tell readers what they "ought to know" than what readers might "want to know" (1%). Said one journalist, "We need to act as an antenna for the reader." "After all," claimed one editor, "TV news is run by reader surveys." The implication is that TV caters to the audience's desires, an inherently inferior approach to journalism. Thus the majority viewed news as being what they--reporters and editors--think it is.

The majority (56%) favored a balance between the two and many noted that a dichotomy need not exist between what the reader ought to know and wants to know. Instead, they said the journalist's job is to create interest in important stories by "packaging (them) in a manner that makes the public want to read them." Others thought it arrogant to dictate to the reader.

While most used themselves as a gauge for the average reader's interest and lifestyle, many acknowledged that the life of the journalist is likely to be different. "Success lies in the ability to relate to the reader," offered one individual, "and newspaper people have gotten so middle class that they have forgotten what affects people." According to this perspective, reporters who equate reader interest and impact with "anything that matters to me" are probably missing the target.

The types of stories news people typically consider newsworthy appear in Table 1.2. Not surprisingly, journalistic priorities are given to local and breaking news. There were differences of opinion expressed by journalists from big as compared to small circulation papers. The smaller papers tended to give higher relative priority to features while the larger papers gave lesser priority to routine government news. The type of media environment in which the paper circulated (e.g., the presence of a nearby major metropolitan paper or local television) also affected how much obligation it felt to cover non-local news and news already reported by broadcast media.

Table 1.2

<u>News Category</u>	<u>Average Response*</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Average Response</u>
Breaking news	4.46	Business and Finance	3.56
Local news	4.43	Scandals and corruption	3.53
National news	4.02**	Analysis of long term trends	3.36
State news	3.82**	News items already reported by broadcast media	3.00**
Investigative reports	3.75	Service news column	2.77
Interpretive background stories	3.73	Routine government news	2.41**
International news	3.72		
Features on people and lifestyles	3.66**		

* The means are based on a 1 (very low priority) to 5 (very high priority) scale, with 3 being the midpoint.

**Results differed significantly across locations.

Despite the differences of opinion, and despite varying attitudes toward the reporter's ability to speak for or represent the general population, most maintain that defining news is a journalistic prerogative at the least and more likely, a journalistic responsibility.

Journalists were also asked to rank several qualities often used to evaluate a news story. As indicated in Table 1.3, accuracy and impartiality were considered most important by most respondents. The investigative

Table 1.3

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Ranking percent:</u> 1 or 2 3 or 4 5 or 6			<u>Average Rank</u>
Below are several attributes often associated with the quality of a news story. How would you rank them? Rank from 1 (highest) to 6 (lowest), with no ties:				
Accuracy	96%	2%	2%	1.21
Impartiality	62%	26%	12%	2.72
Depth	21%	66%	13%	3.31
Investigative enterprise	10%	59%	31%	3.96
Literary style	3%	31%	65%	4.73
Sophistication of treatment	6%	17%	77%	5.06

qualities of depth of coverage and investigative enterprise were ranked as next in importance, and the style and sophistication of treatment were ranked as least important comparatively.

What and Who Shapes News Judgments?

"Sometimes I wonder how many newspapers are edited for their editors instead of for the public. I think there is a good deal of it that goes on. But it is very discreet, so you wouldn't admit it."

-- A reporter, 1981

"The publisher has a bias toward business. He is against bad news about the economy. We play it down."

-- A reporter, 1981

"The executive editor sets the agenda with the city editor. The publisher indirectly affects (news judgments) through the executive editor."

-- A reporter, 1981

The predominant influences on news people's definitions of news are those people and organizations who have the most direct access to the newsroom.

In exploring what today's journalist considers newsworthy, a major issue the study addressed was how journalists decide what is news and what people or factors influence those decisions. Influences on journalists' personal definitions of news were probed along with influences on their newspaper's process of deciding what is news.

Most journalists report that what they consider news today is different than what they considered news when they first became a journalist. When asked if their definition of news had changed since the time they entered the profession, 86% responded that it had. Of these respondents, 29% said it had changed only slightly, 38% said it had changed somewhat and 20% said it had changed "very much."

A series of questions probed what might account for this evolving definition of news. The news people were asked to estimate the amount of

influence various persons and organizations have on their personal concept of what is newsworthy (see Table 1.4). Despite the fact that only about half (54%) of the news people hold a journalism degree, journalistic training rated the greatest amount of influence. As people reported in the in-depth interviews, some of that training was in the form of on-the-job experience. Supervisors and news sources were rated as next most influential, followed by peers on the staff and priorities of network news and prestige papers. Least influential were the findings of readership surveys, local competing media, and friends and acquaintances.

Table 1.4

Influences on the Journalist's Definition of "News"*					
	Percent:	Influential (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Not Influential (1 or 2)	Average
Journalistic training		64%	20%	16%	3.71
Supervisors		46%	30%	24%	3.29
News sources		41%	34%	25%	3.22
Peers on the staff		34%	32%	34%	2.95
Priorities of network news and prestige newspapers		28%	36%	35%	2.96
Friends and acquaintances		26%	30%	44%	2.71
Local competing news media		11%	32%	47%	2.62
Findings of readership research		24%	27%	49%	2.55

* The scale ranged from 1 (not at all influential) to 5 (very influential). Responses of 1 or 2 have been grouped under the label "not influential," responses of 3, under the label "in-between" and responses of 4 or 5, under the label "influential."

These results indicate that for the practicing journalist, the most influential factors in determining the definition of "news," besides formal journalistic training, are those persons or sources with whom the journalist

interacts in the everyday work environment. These include supervising editors, staff peers, reporters, news sources and the wire services.

Journalists were also asked if their newspaper had a policy which defined news. No newspaper reported the existence of any explicit policies. Some editors who were asked this question responded that they tried to set guidelines and that policies were implicitly understood. However, most of the news staffers did not recognize the existence of any such policies. Only 21% of interviewees reported the presence of any kind of policy, while 73% said they were not aware of any. This is not too startling a perception when one considers the difficulty that many newsroom personnel had articulating their conception of news. Often the remark was made that news was too abstract a term to be easily defined. This ambiguity was also cited frequently as a reason for the lack of a newsroom policy on what constitutes news.

Another potential influence on one's definition of news is the person or persons the journalist has in mind when writing or editing a story. In the interviews, the journalists were asked, "When you are writing (editing) stories, who are you writing (editing) for... what target audiences do you have in mind... your peers, your sources, your superiors, the average reader, or who?" The most commonly cited target was the reader (mentioned by 66%). Others equated writing for oneself as writing for the reader. "We are average people," said one. "If we think it's important and interesting, so will they (the readers)." Another echoed the same thought: "I write for myself. I consider myself typical of the audience, I hope. They like the same things that I do."

Other less commonly cited audiences were peers on the staff (9%) and editors (8%). "A lot of people write for their peers. This contest thing is overemphasized," stated one journalist. Another remarked, "We say we are writing for our readers, (but) we are trying to outwrite each other."

Writing for anyone other than the reader seemed to be almost an illegal act on the part of the journalist. However, those who initially said that the reader was the target would often admit after probing that they had different or additional audiences in mind.

Another series of questions addressed the ways in which the newspaper as a whole determines what is newsworthy. Specifically, the influences on the newspaper's definition and the decision-making processes within the newsroom were assessed. Table 1.5 contains the results of a question which asked, "Now we would like to know what factors influence the dominant conception of what is news in your newspaper." The journalists felt that their editors, the wire services, reporters, news sources, national newspapers, readers who communicate directly with the paper, and elected and non-elected public leaders and officials are most influential in setting the newspaper's definition of "news." The least influential, in the journalists' opinions, are the newspaper's public relations department, any existing readership committee or ombudsman, and the newspaper's advertising department. Moderate influence was reported for the competing local media and national broadcast media.

In the personal interviews, journalists were asked to indicate the extent to which day-to-day decisions in assigning priority to news items are influenced by a number of similar factors. Sixty-six percent (66%) of those interviewed said that "the ideas that are generated by the reporters" are highly influential; 32% said the "ideas that flow down to reporters" are highly influential; 23% said that "the agenda set by the wire services" is highly influential; 20% said that "initiatives from the public at large" are highly influential; 2% said that "local leaders who direct attention to certain issues" are highly influential; and no one (0%) said that "the findings of readership surveys" are highly influential.

Table 1.5

Influences on the Newspaper's Definition of "News"					
	Percent:	Influential (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Not Influential (1 or 2)	Average
Supervising editors		92%	6%	3%	4.41
Wire services		69%	22%	9%	3.85
Reporters		63%	27%	11%	3.70
News sources		53%	37%	11%	3.54
National newspapers (<u>New York Times</u> , etc.)		47%	26%	28%	3.25
Readers who directly communicate with the newspaper		41%	31%	28%	3.16
Nonelected community leaders		36%	37%	28%	3.09
Local elected community officials		36%	34%	30%	3.09
Competing local print media		35%	27%	39%	2.91
Competing local broadcast media		29%	33%	39%	2.83
National network TV news		30%	33%	37%	2.87
Competing local broadcast media		29%	33%	39%	2.83
News magazines (Time, Newsweek)		16%	33%	52%	2.52
Advertising department		16%	20%	65%	2.16
Readership committee/ombudsman		12%	18%	70%	1.95
Public relations department		7%	18%	76%	1.79

* Asked on a scale from 1 (not at all influential) to 5 (very influential).

In general, the news people indicated that the major influence on a day-to-day basis was the news itself. "(We are) captives of the news," was one journalist's opinion. On the question of who generates the ideas for stories, most were in agreement that reporters were most influential. One editor stated, "What I'd like is to see the reporters generating more. That's their job." A reporter observed, "A whole lot of editors know little about the town...reporters are more sensitive to what's going on." Another responded, "Writers hear about things and bring the ideas into the editors who make decisions on how to write it."

These results, not surprisingly, are similar to the influences on the journalists' own definitions of news. It appears that those who are most influential are those people or organizations with direct access to the newsroom-- the journalists themselves, their sources, and the wire services. The greater the "distance" from the newsroom, the less perceived influence on conceptions of newsworthiness.

Apart from the people who influence news decisions, one internal organizational factor is the beat structure. Most respondents agreed that beat assignments affected the amount of coverage given to certain topics, such as local governmental news, and that the presence of fixed beats could result in important omissions of topics falling outside the beat categories. But most felt that the use of general assignment reporters and periodic revisions in the beat structure compensated for possible problems.

A final issue addressed was whether news-gathering and writing are influenced by the presence of "sacred cows" (a term supplied by the respondents themselves). When asked, "Are there any areas that you think are news that people in management discourage you from covering," the interviewees first responded that there were no specific issues they absolutely could not cover

(a not surprising reply since few reported a newspaper policy defining "news"). When probed further, some of the news personnel did volunteer that while there were no sacred cows per se, there were topics that the editors did not emphasize or benignly neglected. In other instances, the reporters heard through the newsroom "grapevine" which topics were not favorites of certain editors or publishers. Among those mentioned occasionally were such things as the wine and liquor industry, gay rights, negative business news, labor problems at the newspaper itself, science news, financial news, blacks, local utilities and banks, unions, some social issues and legally sensitive topics. Reporters were quick to point out, however, that if the story was big enough, these topics were not taboo. They also added that they had better be sure of the accuracy of the more controversial stories to avoid possible legal action.

Is There Consensus on What is News?

"There is a lot of consensus--we don't depart too much."

-- An editor, 1981

"There is a fascinating drift. Some people would say we are all on the same wavelength; other would say that there is no agreement. We do not have a democracy. Someone has to decide. There is not that much consensus but we are not seeking it."

-- A managing editor, 1981

"For the most part, the chosen few do agree pretty much, they think in the same terms."

--A reporter, 1981

Journalists disagree on how much agreement exists within newsrooms, and their own news priorities are at odds with what they think their newspaper's priorities are.

Related to the issue of how today's journalists define news is the question of whether agreement exists within newsrooms on what is newsworthy. The in-depth interviews yielded a diversity of opinions. Some news people told us there is "substantial" consensus and "no great debates." Others said

there are lots of disagreements, especially over emphasis given a story. One said they may nearly come to "fisticuffs" over the play stories receive. Another reported both lots of disagreements and consensus.

Reactions varied by location. At one newspaper we were told a consensus was only developing. At another, much greater agreement was perceived, in large part because top management has made its philosophy known. At a third, a consensus was rejected as a goal.

Perceptions also differed by position. Senior editors were more likely to report that a broad consensus exists. Those at lower ranks were likely to perceive greater similarity of views among people at the top and less similarity between themselves and top management. Said one, "There is a generation gap in the paper." People also reported greater consensus within than across departments.

Survey results confirmed these divergences of opinion. Only a fourth believed their paper has a unified approach to news (an issue addressed later in the report) and only 19% thought the approach is in line with their own views. When asked whether others on the staff share their own personal definition of news, more than half believed reporters hold very or somewhat similar views and more than half believed supervisors have views similar to their own. However, 42% and 46%, respectively, were unsure or perceived dissimilarities. Less than a majority thought copy editors share their own views and 37% thought the publisher holds a similar news definition (see Table 1.6). Not surprisingly, supervisory personnel were more likely to perceive similarities with other supervisors than did those in lower ranks. By location, the only difference occurred on perceptions of copy editors.

Table 1.6

Statement	Percent:	Similar (1 or 2)	In-Between (3)	Dissimilar (4 or 5)	Average
To what extent do you think each of the following share your definition of what is newsworthy? (1 = very similar definition, 5 = very different definition)					
reporters on the staff		58%	27%	16%	2.43
supervising editors		54%	24%	22%	2.54
copy editors		47%	32%	21%	2.62*
publisher		37%	38%	25%	2.85
* Results differed significantly across locations.					

As another effort to assess commonality in news priorities, we compared news people's own priorities on news topics with what they thought their newspaper's priorities were. There were consistent disparities between one's own rankings and those attributed to the newspaper (see Table 1.7). The differences identify those categories of news journalists feel are receiving inadequate or excessive emphasis by their own paper. They show journalists desiring to give greater priority to enterprise, interpretive and analytic stories, as well as breaking news of local or international import, lifestyles and business coverage. The perception is that routine government and sensational news are overplayed and that newspapers are too influenced by what broadcast media cover.

Ironically, there were almost no differences between supervisory and non-supervisory personnel in their personal priority rankings, suggesting that greater consensus may exist than news people generally recognize.

One final effort to address shared news definitions involved asking those personally interviewed to rank order the news value of five stories

Table 1.7

<u>News Categories for which Own Priority Exceeds Paper's</u>	<u>News Categories for which Paper's Priority is Believed to Exceed Own</u>
Local news	News already reported by broadcast media
State news	Routine government news
International news	News of scandals and corruption
Breaking news	Service news columns (like Help columns)
Interpretive background stories	
Analysis of long-term social trends	
Investigative reports	
Features on people and lifestyles	
Business and finance coverage	

selected from the front section of the previous day's newspaper. Usually two stories were selected from the front page and a mix of national and local topics was included. The results again showed a lack of consensus. While agreement tended to be higher on the first- and fifth-ranked stories, the amount of disagreement still was surprising. Looking only at the stories that emerged as first-ranked at each of the eight locations, they received 80 first ranks, 37 second ranks, 21 third ranks, 11 fourth ranks and 3 last ranks--or almost as many non-first ranks as first ranks. Ranking on other stories varied more. (Table 1.8 shows the average rankings each location gave its stories. The standard deviation, which reflects the amount of variability in responses, is shown in parenthesis).

As one individual remarked, there is bound to be a lack of consensus because everyone's notion of what is newsworthy is so personal. That individual was right!

Table 1.8

Mean Rankings and Standard Deviations on Newsworthiness of Five Stories*					
Location	Top-ranked Story	Second-ranked Story	Third-ranked Story	Fourth-ranked Story	Fifth-ranked Story
1	1.68 (1.11)	2.37 (1.34)	3.42 (1.26)	3.58 (1.12)	3.95 (0.97)
2	1.95 (1.00)	2.60 (1.54)	2.80 (1.20)	3.16 (0.93)	4.75 (0.55)
3	1.76 (0.93)	2.68 (1.31)	2.76 (1.16)	3.72 (1.24)	4.08 (1.19)
4	2.12 (1.05)	2.35 (1.42)	2.82 (1.33)	2.95 (1.23)	4.53 (0.72)
5	1.83 (0.87)	2.79 (1.35)	3.25 (2.15)	3.46 (1.21)	4.29 (1.12)
6	1.61 (0.84)	2.00 (1.24)	3.33 (0.84)	3.61 (0.85)	4.50 (0.98)
7	1.62 (0.83)	2.00 (0.96)	3.07 (0.91)	3.69 (1.06)	4.62 (0.62)
8	1.29 (0.61)	2.43 (1.09)	2.93 (1.07)	4.21 (0.80)	4.21 (0.80)

* The means for each location are the average rank, from 1 to 5, given each of the stories. Whichever story received the highest overall rank (the mean closest to 1) is listed as the "Top-ranked Story." Whichever story received the next highest rank in a given locale is listed second, and so forth. The closer the average rank is to 1, the more people that assigned the story a high priority; the closer the average rank is to 5, the more people that assigned the story low priority. The number in parenthesis under the rank is the standard deviation, which measures the amount of variability in responses. The higher the number, the greater the disagreement among respondents on what rank the story deserved. Total number of respondents completing the ranking task was 152.

THE COMMUNICATION OF THE JOURNALIST -- WITHOUT AND WITHIN

One of the issues that originally prompted study of newsroom attitudes and practices was the suspicion that the profession has begun to lose contact with its public. To address this possibility, the questionnaire posed several questions about journalists' interactions with each other and with non-journalists. The in-depth interviews also probed the nature of feedback from the public and news people's perceptions of their familiarity with the public. Interestingly, many of the insights into this issue came not from the pre-planned series of questions but from spontaneous comments permeating the interviews and informal conversations that took place.

Are Journalists Insulated from the Public?

"News people keep to themselves too much. They don't know much about what people are experiencing or talking about. They just need more maturity."

-- An assistant editor, 1981

"We lose sight of the public's opinion because we spend so much time with journalists."

-- A reporter, 1981

The typical news person professes a desire for more familiarity and involvement with the public but limits initiatives to do so.

Journalists believe they mix frequently with the public (see Table 2.1). Three out of five said they have a lot of contact with "people in walks of life very different from my own" (an expected finding in a news-gathering profession), two-thirds reported that non-journalists ask their opinions about things in the news, and three-quarters disagreed with the statement that they rarely discuss news events with non-journalists.

But these responses don't tell the whole story. If one eliminates work-related contacts and public-initiated contacts about work-related topics, the degree of community integration appears to be much less. Far fewer people reported actually being involved with a variety of outside groups and activities

than believe they should be: Only one-third reported such activity while nearly half thought it desirable. However, over a fourth believed they should not participate in community activities (a belief no doubt reinforced in some cases by company policy).

Less than half said they regularly seek out non-journalists' opinions about the news. Particularly telling are the high percentages of respondents who reported frequent or somewhat frequent socializing with other staff members and whose friendships center around co-workers or others in the newspaper industry. This pattern of frequent association with other news people is most true of those who have been in the industry less than three years (as might be expected).

Table 2.1

Communication Statement*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
Non-journalists often ask my opinion about things in the news.	68%	18%	14%	3.81
I have a lot of contact with people in walks of life very different from my own.	62%	20%	18%	3.72
I think journalists should be involved with outside groups and activities.	46%	27%	27%	3.27
I regularly seek out non-journalists' opinions about the news.	46%	24%	30%	3.24
I socialize frequently with other members of the newspaper staff.	40%	23%	37%	3.03
I am involved with a variety of groups and people in the community.	35%	21%	44%	2.85
The majority of my friends are associated with the newspaper business in one way or another.	28%	21%	51%	2.60
I rarely discuss news events with non-journalists.	14%	11%	75%	1.97

* All agree/disagree statements are on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

These results are consistent with comments frequently made during the interviews that journalists' off-hours contacts are too often limited to other staffers, with little or no mixing in the community. Editors were particularly likely to report that "our people don't socialize in the community," but their own reported contacts appeared to be somewhat limited as well.

Socializing with peers is common among professional groups, but it may present a unique problem for news people if it contributes to reduced ties to the public they want to serve. One way to compensate for limited voluntary socializing is through feedback procedures at the newspaper. Accordingly, we asked interviewees how much feedback they receive from the public and whether they think the staff at their newspaper have a good feel for the readers.

Staffers in several newsrooms didn't agree on how much public feedback their newspaper receives, but the predominant opinion was that there is not enough. Quotes from one newspaper illustrate the mix of views:

"There is very little contact between the news desk and the reader."

"Reader response is extremely low--I'm delighted when I get a letter."

"I can't go anywhere without hearing about the paper."

"Not much (reader input). Sometimes it's a problem--I often don't know what they're thinking."

"Mostly we get feedback through hearsay and letters to the editor."

The amount of reader input varied across newspapers and departments within newspapers. In some newsrooms, it is sought through in-paper questionnaires, readership surveys, focus groups or the presence of an ombudsman. In other places, feedback is more haphazard, taking the form of occasional phone calls or letters to the editor. In some cases, feedback is implicitly

discouraged. Staff members at one location said phone calls in some departments are answered by clerks who are more inclined to pacify the caller than forward the information or criticism received.

In sum, some staffers feel more in touch with reader sentiment than others. But on the whole, the amount of systematic feedback into the newsroom appears to be, in the words of one, "a pathetically average amount."

However, even when there is a good deal of feedback, staffers said it has little impact on how the news is covered. Most expressed skepticism about the usefulness or validity of such reader input. Said one sports writer, "I'm not sure whether reader participation is the best guide of whether we have a good product."

The combination of the limited social contacts and lack of public feedback leaves many journalists feeling that they don't know their community or readers. The lament of one assistant editor--"Sometimes I think I am completely out of touch"--captured a frustration expressed by many. That feeling showed, too, in the number of news people who complained they had difficulty completing that portion of the questionnaire asking them to estimate specific reader attitudes or habits. Some said it was an "unfair test" because they had no idea what proportion of adult readers are interested in various topics or who their readers are demographically. Yet they were equally likely to denigrate one of the few systematic means available to them of learning about their readers, namely readership surveys.

Some top managers--editors, publishers, managing editors and assistant managing editors--believed their staffs know their communities. A typical remark: "Collectively we do a pretty good job, we're right on target." But this optimistic assessment is not borne out by the admissions of many reporters and desk editors nor by the survey data. As the next section and subsequent sections on perceptions of readers reveal, a fair number of journalists think

they and their colleagues are too removed from their communities, that they are insufficiently familiar with their public's values, needs and interests. And a fair number attribute to others, or themselves express, elitist attitudes that foster separation from the public.

What are Causes, Effects and Solutions to Insularity?

"Especially the younger reporters are getting removed from society. They come from different backgrounds than the average public. (Theirs is) a snobbish view of the world."

-- An assistant ME, 1981

"It's a settlement problem. Reporters come in and talk down to the residents. This is a problem at any paper. Turnover is the problem. Pay is the problem... If you want to get settled people, you're going to have to pay."

-- An editor, 1981

"There is an elitist view among reporters."

-- A reporter, 1981

Mobility, long working hours and an attitude that news people are different from their readers contribute to journalists feeling out of touch.

One reason given for news people's distance from the public is that many believe they are attitudinally and socio-economically different from the public at large. Whether or not they actually are, the perception fosters a disdain for the public that surfaced in many discussions. As one cynic put it, "If 27,000 people are doing (something), they must be wrong." Even the disclaimer by one respondent that "the readers are not the great unwashed" ironically underscored that such an attitude had been expressed by others.

A second cause mentioned by many was time pressures. News people reported working very long hours and feeling barely able to keep up with the "information overload." Their description of their job as very demanding and endless fits with this concern. The resultant reduction in available time for socializing necessarily limits opportunities to participate in

community activities or mingle with the public. A popular bar near one newspaper offers a convenient social outlet for those with time to socialize, but perhaps at the expense of contact with the public.

A third factor is mobility, which takes two forms: geographic and organizational. Geographically, movement from location to location is frequent and seems encouraged by news people, especially at group newspapers. Reporters and editors spoke of career planning sessions with their supervisors that called for changing locations, in some cases as often as every 18 months. Some said turnover was budgeted (a claim denied by senior management), and some pointed to salary structures designed to penalize stability by bestowing the greatest incremental raises on newcomers. The net result is less integration into or familiarity with the local community.

The second kind of mobility is "upward mobility," or advancement within the status hierarchy. Several interviewees mentioned an increasing preoccupation among journalists with career advancement, which is reinforced by management. Said one, "There are always a number of reporters on the make."

This kind of mobility encourages insularity as well. The survey showed that those people most likely to evidence insularity (as indicated by their lesser reported community involvement and/or more socializing within the organization) are reporters, those in the industry less time and those at their present job less than three years. This means that those who have most recently moved to a new location or been promoted to a new job are least likely to have a network of friendships and contacts in the community. It is not surprising that new reporters are less likely to be well-integrated into the community, but that doesn't negate the problem of their lack of knowledge of the community. Of greater concern should be the insularity of those advancing at a rapid pace within organizations. One could surmise

that career advancement is better served by being well-connected within the organization than within the community.

A further analysis of what contributes to insularity explored the relationship of the journalists' reports of their communication practices and such factors as demographic characteristics, job attitudes and media habits. As Table 2.2 reveals, the most important factors related to fewer contacts in the community are, in rank order: age, magazine readership, readership of one's own newspaper, perceived similarity with the reader, image of one's paper on sensationalism, and image of one's paper on such attributes as timeliness, accuracy, respect and vigilance. Those who are younger, read fewer magazines, read their own paper less thoroughly, see themselves as dissimilar to their readers, and hold a more favorable image of their newspaper have the fewest community contacts. (The relationships between these variables and insularity are not particularly close, however. Other considerations also influence community involvement.)

A somewhat different profile exists for those who interact frequently with colleagues (See Table 2.3). Again, the biggest factor is age: Younger people are more likely to report socializing and friendships with other journalists. Additionally, frequent communication with co-workers is most common among those who are upwardly mobile (as evidenced through the relationships with raises, promotions and recent moves to a new job), who are newer to the profession, who have greater exposure to and favorable attitudes toward professional literature, who feel a greater kinship with their supervisors, who are more satisfied with many aspects of their work environment, and who are more pessimistic about newspaper readership in their community. It is not surprising that such people are more favorable about many facets of their job and hold a positive image of their newspaper. Unfortunately, like those

Table 2.2

Predictors of Isolation from the Community, in Rank Order

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized beta weight
1. Age	As age <u>decreases</u> , insularity <u>increases</u> ; those in the 25-34 age bracket are most <u>insular</u> .	-.11
2. Magazine consumption	As number of magazines read monthly <u>increases</u> , insularity <u>decreases</u> .	-.12
3. Reading of own paper	As thoroughness of reading one's own paper <u>decreases</u> , insularity <u>increases</u> .	-.12
4. Similarity with reader	As perceptions of dissimilarity with the reader <u>increase</u> , insularity <u>increases</u> .	.14
5. Sensationalism image	Those who hold a <u>more</u> favorable image of their paper on sensationalism (seeing it as nonsensational) are <u>more</u> insular.	.10
6. Competence and trust image	Those who hold a <u>more</u> favorable image of their paper on accuracy, timeliness, personalism, respect and vigilance are <u>more</u> insular.	.09
7. Location	Newsrooms differed on the amount of insularity reported by their staff.	.11

Overall $R^2 = .10$ (corrected for shrinkage, $R^2 = .08$)
 Overall F due to regression = 6.77, df = 7, 432, $p < .001$

who have more limited community involvement, they tend to hold less critical views of their own newspaper.

The problems that result from journalists remaining aloof from the public were noted by various news people: inability to establish and cultivate trusted sources; failure to recognize events, people and issues that are locally newsworthy; increased homogeneity of perspectives in the newsroom, with a concomitant loss of ability for self-correction; subtle shifts in writing focus to please peers or themselves rather than a well-defined public; and possibly the most pernicious, a deepening mistrust of the public the journalist is supposed to serve.

Table 2.3

Predictors of Frequent Socializing with Other Journalists, in Rank Order

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized beta weight
1. Age	As age <u>decreases</u> , socializing with colleagues <u>increases</u> ; those in the 25-34 age bracket have the <u>most</u> interaction with other journalists.	-.08
2. Promotion	Those who have been promoted more than once in the last two years communicate <u>more</u> often with colleagues.	.16
3. Years in job	The <u>longer</u> a person has held his/her current job, the <u>less</u> communication with colleagues.	-.15
4. Raises	Those who have received a raise in the last two years engage in <u>more</u> communication with co-workers.	.10
5. Readership of professional publications	As the number of professional publications read <u>increases</u> , the amount of communication with co-workers <u>increases</u> .	.11
6. Reading of own paper	As thoroughness of reading one's own paper <u>increases</u> , communication with colleagues <u>increases</u> .	.11
7. Years in industry	Those people who have been in the industry less than three years communicate <u>more</u> often with other journalists.	-.11
8. Knowledge of research	As belief that one's own newspaper values and uses research <u>increases</u> , communication with co-workers <u>increases</u> .	.09
9. Work satisfaction	As satisfaction with work <u>increases</u> , interaction with colleagues <u>increases</u> .	.08
10. Attitudes toward technology	As favorability of attitudes toward electronic news processing technology <u>increases</u> , amount of communication with co-workers <u>increases</u> .	.24
11. Image	As perceptions of one's newspaper as personal, lively and interesting <u>increase</u> , amount of communication with colleagues <u>increases</u> .	.08
12. Estimate of public newspaper readership	As one's estimate of how many people in the community read the newspaper <u>decreases</u> , communication with co-workers <u>increases</u> .	-.14

Table 2.3 (Con.)

Predictors of Frequent Socializing with Other Journalists, in Rank Order

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized beta weight
13. Location	Newsrooms differed on the amount of communication taking place among staffers (three differed significantly).	.17 -.16 .15

Overall $R^2 = .35$ (corrected for shrinkage, $R^2 = .32$)

Overall F due to regression = 15.09, df = 15, 424, $p < .001$

Some news people offered solutions. One was to encourage greater community participation. This approach was echoed at three different newspapers:

"The greatest personal challenge is to get out of the newsroom and get a feel for the community. It is important not to impose our views on (this community)."

"As an editor, I am trying to get people involved in the community, to socialize more with the community and less with their colleagues."

"As an editor, I need to get out to see what's happening."

Such activity, however, cannot be legislated, especially as 25% believe involvement might jeopardize objectivity and some newspapers have policies barring certain kinds of participation. As one reporter commented, it can be a problem to join an organization about which one might sometime have to write a story. This concern for maintaining one's professional distance and impartiality was often the reason given for limited mixing in the community. The question to be raised is whether it becomes too easy an excuse.

A second set of recommendations revolved around the mobility issue. They included less pressure to move and an altered reward structure that permits talented reporters to remain reporters rather than feeling forced to advance to a desk job. General improvements in salaries were also mentioned. One reporter complained that on his low salary, he couldn't afford to do much else than have a glass of beer with a co-worker when he was off duty.

Low salaries and pressures to move were also sometimes cited as turning the profession into a single-person's occupation. It was argued that people with families find it increasingly difficult to remain in the profession.

Interestingly, people at larger newspapers thought the issue was more serious at those newspapers than at smaller ones. Said one respondent, "That's not much of a problem at small papers where people have been in the community a long time. We (here) are all talking about our careers and where we're going next. I would like to see people settle down more." Yet it was often the people at smaller papers who expressed the greatest concern about turnover. They said they have lower pay scales, their positions may be regarded as less prestigious and they have a higher probability of their newspaper being treated as a training ground or brief stopover for upwardly mobile people in newspaper groups.

While there was a fair amount of sentiment favoring reduced pressure to move, there was also recognition that some turnover is healthy: "Bringing new people in provides a good mix. People may be better able to ask tough questions, to take new approaches. But there is a danger of losing touch with the community." Some balance was called for, but where that balance should be struck was not readily apparent.

Other institutionalized solutions to insularity that were proposed or had been adopted included greater reliance on readership research, more systematic solicitations of reader opinion and criticism, the formation of readership committees and the addition of an ombudsman to the staff. (Current attitudinal resistance toward readership research is addressed elsewhere in this report. As we argue there, research that provides greater knowledge of readers will not be a viable solution unless journalists come to be more trusting of such data and to have greater access to it.) Other

ways of seeking reader opinion, such as in-paper questionnaires or focus groups may offer some useful insights but are limited by the nonrepresentativeness of those who participate.

The ombudsman is also not uniformly welcomed. At the one location where there is an ombudsman, some critics complained about the person not being bland enough, siding too often with the public, requiring corrections to be displayed too prominently and making reporters feel that they were being watched. These criticisms reflected a desire not to be accountable to the public or to have to admit errors. The favorable endorsements of the ombudsman role and the credibility it was perceived to bring the paper did outweigh negative comments. Even so, a single individual in such a role, or a small committee addressing readership issues, cannot be regarded as a substitute for broad-based awareness of community values, habits and interests. The insularity problem, then, must be seen as one of the major issues raised by this study and a particularly complex one because of the many factors contributing to it.

How do Journalists Communicate Within the Newsroom?

"There is not enough discussion between the editor and reporter about what's going on and where the stories are going. There are just hurried shouts."

-- A reporter, 1981

"It's been a long time (since) I worked anywhere else but there is a lack of communication around here."

-- A section editor, 1981

"We may not have enough discussion with enough people, so it becomes difficult to identify standards both at the reporter and editor level."

-- An assistant managing editor, 1981

These quotes, coming from three different levels within the newsroom and from three different locations, capture the prevailing opinions about the adequacy of communication taking place within the typical newsroom. News people enjoy talking with each other and would like to spend more time discussing their newspaper with their bosses.

It is not so much that there is too little interaction taking place -- in fact, in some locations quite the opposite was reported -- but rather that the nature of the interactions and who they are with are key concerns.

In terms of sheer quantity, a majority of respondents (56%) reported interacting frequently with co-workers about their stories; somewhat fewer (47%) reported having frequent interaction with supervisors. The averages, shown in table 2.4, indicate an intermediate degree of task-related discussion occurring. Results varied significantly by location, position and department.

Table 2.4

<u>Communication Statements*</u>	Percent: <u>Agree</u>	<u>In-Between</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Average</u>
My co-workers frequently discuss their stories with me.	56%	26%	18%	3.54**
My editor and I frequently discuss the content of various stories.	47%	22%	31%	3.23**
I seek out information from bulletin boards, memos, and other internal communications to find out what's happening at the paper.	80%	11%	9%	4.12**
When I have a problem, I generally seek out my immediate supervisor.	58%	16%	28%	3.50**

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
 **Results differed significantly across locations.

Smaller newspapers tended to report greater communication, although this is not a consistent pattern. Within papers, reporters, those who have been in their present position less than three years and those in features and sports departments tended to claim more frequent discussions. Attitudinally, those who feel more similar to their supervisors also reported more frequent discussions within the newsroom.

News people uniformly agreed that they rely on memos, bulletin board notices and the like to learn what is happening at their paper.

Comments from the in-depth interviews supported the variability in the amount of conversation taking place. It was not uncommon for the same newsroom to produce reports both of very little and a great deal of communication occurring. For example, one managing editor, when asked how much discussion takes place in the newsroom about what should and should not be investigated or reported, replied, "Barrels of it." Others in the same newsroom said it was insufficient.

What became apparent as these inconsistencies were probed was that while a fair amount of interaction took place among peers, both the amount and quality of interactions across levels of the organization were below what news professionals desire. Even though a plurality (47%) said they frequently talk with a supervisor, a sizable 31% reported that such interaction is lacking. Moreover, the limited amount of serious discussion between reporters and editors was a frequently voiced concern in the interviews. In particular, people at all eight locations said they rarely get explanations for decisions on assignments, story publication, story display and editing changes. Any explanations usually must be requested. While people volunteered that there is seldom time for such discussions, the result is still frustration. One person even spoke of turmoil resulting when reasons are not known.

A related complaint was lack of guidance from managers as to the newspaper's goals and priorities. At one location, there was a call for more complementary interaction between management and staff because, it was said, there is a gap between reporters and the managing editor. At another paper, some staffers said they thought there were still some sacred cows that could not be covered by their paper, but that they only knew that through the grapevine. Management at that newspaper of course disagreed that there were any, but it was apparent that such an attitude had not been transmitted

to the staff. At a third location, a reporter told us that "if there is any consensus from editors, it has not been communicated to us." Two of the opening quotes came from two other locations and a copy editor at a sixth complained about too many layers of management preventing adequate interaction across levels. In fact, only one newspaper's staff seemed to feel relatively confident that its paper's news philosophy and standards had been communicated to them.

This problem is not unrecognized by management. One senior editor told us, "It is the fault of all of us who supervise." Others acknowledged that lack of explanations can be a problem, but they were inclined to think that explanations are given when appropriate. One newspaper, in an effort to provide greater opportunity for staff to give and receive feedback, instituted a monthly senior staff meeting to which the staff routinely sent representatives. Reporters and editors alike had some criticisms about the way it was working, but it at least represented a concrete mechanism for cross flow of information and opinions.

In addition to wanting more feedback and guidance, junior staffers also complained about having too little input into the decision-making process. While most reporters conceded that a lot of informal discussion takes place and that they have a lot of say about what stories they personally cover, they seemed to want more formalized opportunities for influencing news decisions. Attending budget meetings, having frequent departmental meetings, or having periodic planning sessions did not automatically assure greater feelings of influence.

Staffers might clamor for a greater role no matter what management attempted, but some of the existing mechanisms may also be too sporadic to be satisfying or may not actually allow reporters to voice an opinion (as in the case of attending budget meetings). At least at present, there

are some who feel that the staff is not consulted enough about what goes into the paper.

Finally, a few complaints about supervisor communication patterns centered on overcommunication among editors themselves, excessive reliance on unproductive staff meetings, and overuse of memos as a means of communicating with reporters. In one location where all three problems were mentioned, we were told about a group of assistant editors spending far more time in planning meetings than was necessary or useful, having concomitantly less time to spend with their subordinates and sending out floods of memos. Given the cry elsewhere for more formalized discussion vehicles and greater feedback from supervisors, such complaints leave sincerely concerned managers with conflicting messages about how to behave. But this latter set of complaints at least signals that intended correctives can also go awry. It also suggests that reporters would be happier if they were included in the planning sessions and that face-to-face communication is preferred over written memoranda.

Despite junior staffers' negative comments about the level of their involvement, most reporters and assistant editors believe they can freely approach their supervisor when they have a problem or want explanations. A majority (58%) stated that they seek out their immediate supervisor when they have a problem (although more than a quarter said they did not). Most interviewees said they could ask why their stories were edited or not published and they would get an answer. Most also described their first-line supervisors as very approachable and receptive. Almost no one felt intimidated about criticizing their newspaper or voicing opinions to their editors. Said one, "You can tell your boss he's full of it."

In fact, many papers provided opportunities for frank exchanges. In One place, it is a monthly critique and gripe session. In another, it is

the use of the nearby bar to receive blunt feedback from the bosses and to express one's own criticisms in return. This airing of complaints is one healthy aspect of a relatively free flow of communication from subordinate to supervisor. It is definitely not the practice in a lot of organizations and professions.

As for communication among peers, it has already been noted that a sizable amount occurs within levels. Not all of this is regarded positively, however. In half the locations, we heard comments about much of the informal conversation being unfocused, unproductive, and devoted to gossip, bitching or discussions behind editors' backs. This kind of social interaction naturally occurs in any organization and should not be taken as a sign that journalists are uniquely petty or gossip-prone. All it does is temper an overly favorable interpretation of the amount of communication that is taking place.

A larger concern is the frequency with which people complained about the increasingly competitive atmosphere within the newsroom. While journalism is by nature a competitive activity and competition can be healthy, too much can undermine organizational morale and productivity. The number of snide remarks about the "chosen few," people being on the make, the political people being most vocal in decision-making, and upwardly mobile individuals ingratiating themselves to those most likely to next move into supervisory roles suggested that a conflictual rather than collegial climate is developing within some newsrooms. At one location where such comments were particularly frequent, we heard the following:

"It is very competitive within the newsroom, which becomes dangerous. It is cutthroat. It is ironic that it tries to cover compassion written by reporters who would kill... Advancement is a disease."

This same person went on to say that he thought it was probably worse at other papers and that the blame could be laid in part on journalism school and in part on corporate structure, which doesn't allow people to be individuals and brings with it office politics. Others voiced similar concerns about "new journalists," who were said to be too assertive, often with the blessing of management, and to come out of journalism school modeling themselves after Joe Rossi, thinking they have to be hard-nosed and hurt someone to get ahead. These comments, coupled with the concerns expressed about the profession increasingly becoming a young, single person's profession, all contributed to the impression of an overly competitive, politically charged communication environment, where at least some energies are diverted away from news-gathering and editing and toward solidifying one's standing with higher-ups in the status hierarchy.

As some noted, what is likely to suffer is the product. The question for managers is whether undue emphasis is being placed on career advancement to the detriment of cooperative, amicable working relations among peers and at the expense of professional dedication to the organization's overriding responsibility, producing an accurate, timely, enterprising and thorough newspaper.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT OF THE JOURNALIST

The leadership style and the decision-making process within a newsroom significantly affect what kind of news product it creates. So does employee satisfaction with the job. The next series of questions explored what kind of work environment currently exists and what journalists would prefer.

Who's in Charge?

"The editors decide what merits coverage and the assistant managing editor decides what gets in. It boils down to a consensus among the editors."

-- A reporter, 1981

"This paper could be characterized as 'management by committee'."

-- A reporter, 1981

"God knows where decisions come from. There are strong-willed editors at the paper, but it seems as though their influence is sporadic and inconsistent."

-- A reporter, 1981

"The days of the managing editor chewing on a cigar and saying, 'that's the way it's going to be' are long gone."

-- An editor, 1981

Leadership in newsrooms ranges from laissez-faire to authoritarian, with reporters having considerable control over what gets covered.

If one were to simply judge who runs today's newsrooms based on the descriptions given of the daily decision-making process, one would conclude that editors exercise great control. This is because of their prominence in daily budget decisions. Here are some illustrative descriptions of the process:

"The executive editors and managing editors decide at the budget meeting on a day-to-day basis."

"The executive editor sets the agenda with the city editor. The copy desk and the managing editor make decisions on play."

"The managing editor sets the tone and pace, second level editors have a lot of influence and desk people generate assignments, assign priorities. Editors do a lot of talking out of priorities at the budget meeting."

"The 2 p.m. (budget) meeting is a critique and planning session, and later meetings are held to coordinate and guide by general policies (those) ideas that are developed at the staff meeting."

But the reporters also play a very influential role, for the story ideas usually originate with them. One managing reporter said that "90 to 95% of the ideas begin with reporters." Another editor said that it is reporters "who know what's going on day-to-day. Editors look at long range trends. The editor doesn't know what's going on on the street." Most reporters agreed, saying they inform their supervisors about the stories they are writing and the supervisors either approve or disapprove.

The amount of reporter influence differed from location to location, however. Reporters at one newspaper told us, "This is a reporter's paper. I can write anything I want. Reporters make the decisions and that's what makes or breaks the paper." At another location, they said they "wouldn't call this a reporter's paper; it's a 50/50 split." But almost everyone said that whatever they write gets into the paper.

Questionnaire results confirmed that reporters have considerable freedom in deciding what stories to cover, in planning their work on a daily basis and in exercising their creativity. As Table 3.1 indicates, seven out of ten respondents reported considerable freedom for individual decision-making, with little interference from supervisors. Supervisors consistently reported more freedom for themselves than did reporters, as might be expected. By location, the only difference that appeared was on supervisors insisting that decisions be left to them: The averages ranged from 1.95 to 2.72, indicating that news people at all locations disagreed with the statement, and at some more strongly than at others.

Table 3.1

Work Freedom Statements*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
My supervisor allows me extensive freedom to plan and organize my work.	71%	14%	15%	3.83
My supervisor insists that I stick to my job and leave decisions and planning to him/her.	20%	16%	64%	2.36*
My supervisor always insists that I solve my own work problems, but is available to advise me if I should need it.	39%	31%	30%	3.13
*Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).				
*Results differed significantly across locations.				

While journalists across the board reported extensive freedom in their own day-to-day work assignments, reports of management's control of the newspaper's daily decision-making varied widely across locations. Several journalists told us their paper was run by "a triumvirate," "a troika" or "the gang of four." Some, through their comments, revealed an authoritarian or bureaucratic management style:

"Things that sift down become 'musts'."

"The news editor runs it as a fiefdom."

"There are too many chiefs. As a result, too many things fall through the cracks and people become territorial. There is less communication among the legs of management structure."

"It's 'macho editing'. There is too much time spent by managers on production. There is no time for planning."

"Management spends too much time jousting with... windmills."

The concern with excessive bureaucracy was especially likely to surface in group-owned newspapers. It was said that corporate structure may provide an abundance

of leadership, but leadership that may be too oriented to bureaucratic detail and to form over substance.

At one location, this translated into complaints about managers being "meeting happy." One sub-editor characterized the focus of management at this particular paper as an emphasis on "process rather than product." A reporter likewise noted that "daily staff meetings are important to the brass."

Other locations reported a more democratic style:

"It works better here with low-key people at the top.
We don't have the person who comes down hard on you.
People have respect for each other."

And yet in other locations, a more laissez-faire style was in evidence but not welcomed:

"Reporters are pretty much in charge of what gets covered.
Maybe news execs need to ride herd more, question, direct,
challenge."

"We need someone at the top to motivate people to be more enterprising. The future of the newspaper is in enterprise.
... We're not pushed enough."

One reply to the question of who runs the paper--"It depends on the position of the earth."--captured well the frustration expressed by many with a nondirective or inconsistent leadership style.

When news people were asked what leadership style they would prefer, they generally expressed a preference for a cross between an authoritarian and democratic style with managers providing leadership, guidance and quality control. Reporters said they did not want "wishy-washy" management. They wanted "flexibility and the opportunity to be self-starters" but also a strong editor who sets priorities without "dulling up the tools."

Essentially, they indicated a need for a "presence" to be created by managers who are committed to editorial excellence. Many expressed concern that inadequate emphasis is placed on quality at present. Said one, "Its

easy for an editor to fall into just filling the paper, but lose touch with the product." Another commented, "The role of the copy editor should be improved. It is a potentially important position that is underutilized." Concern was also expressed by some that group papers are not committed to quality: "There is too much emphasis on quantity rather than quality in a chain paper," said one.

News people indicated a need for more leadership and communication of editorial policy from all levels of supervision, not just top management. As was said, it is "needed at each department level. Consistency comes with good leadership at all levels." "(It) shouldn't be up to one very strong individual to chart the course of the paper. We need a cross-section of consistent leadership." But especially important seemed to be a "definition from the top," guidelines or policies on what is valued.

In the same vein, reporters expressed a need for greater feedback and criticism of their work. "We need teachers." "We need a better dialogue between editors and reporters to press for details, fine-tuning, to keep stuff from being pushed through." "We want to know what's expected. We want someone (as editor) who is a facilitator and gives help." Many reporters expressed dismay at being ignored.

Interestingly, John McMillan, publisher of the Salem Statesman-Journal, heard similar remarks in his discussions with journalists in eight newsrooms in the west:

"I want to learn. But no one teaches me anything. It's a wonderful job, a great assignment. But no one edits a word I write. I crave help."

"Praise is too loosely given and criticism too rarely given. It's the I'm okay, you're okay school of journalism." (As quoted in the January 1982 issue of the Gannetteer.)

Across locations, there was almost a schizophrenia about the preferences for the management style which would work best. At those papers where an

authoritarian leadership style was prevalent, journalists typically expressed a desire for a more democratic structure. "Too strong an editor makes work difficult and can have an intimidating influence which can kill stories." Of course, the opposite was true for those currently operating under a democratic leadership style. "A strong editor is respected if he or she has good news sense. I do not want to work for a wimp." It seems that an editor must be both firm and lenient simultaneously. Whether or not this idealized leadership is possible, is a moot question. The reporters know what they want. "I respect a strong editor, but like one who's laid back."

One paper appears to have arrived at a system resembling the ideal, at least according to the journalists who work there. The tone is reflected in the following statement. "What is news is very subjective -- given that, it's not the same as other work environments -- it argues for more leadership at the top. The process in the end is not democratic." As at other papers, initiation of story ideas typically started with the reporters. Then, at the budget meeting, decisions were made on play. However, this paper was set apart from the others in that "management has made it clear what their product is and how they have arrived at their decisions." Reporters said they have the freedom they want, but have "like minds in key positions to provide consistent leadership" and journalistic guidance to alleviate the ambiguity which leads to conflict and dissatisfaction.

It is also interesting to note that this particular paper had a high regard for readership surveys. "We use findings of readership surveys to decide on the types of stories we cover." "We use it as one more plug into the story." "Surveys have confirmed our gut feeling." Apparently, research is a key ingredient in the formulation of guidelines at this paper.

Do Newsrooms Have a Unified News Policy?

"There is no sense on the staff of where we're going. (I have a) feeling we're improving, but we don't know what we're trying to be--investigative, regional, state...."

--A writer, 1981

"There is a reluctance at the top to tell people no--they're afraid to prioritize because it will upset someone."

--A desk editor, 1981

"There are all sorts of policies and rules of thumb for trivia but no policy on major news stories."

--An assistant managing editor,
1981

"It should not be a mystery how I view news."

--A managing editor, 1981

Most journalists do not believe their paper has an identifiable or consistent news policy. Those who do are more likely to see supervisors and readers as "like minds."

Journalists who were interviewed were asked if their paper has any policies that define what is newsworthy. No one reported the presence of one. Some said there was "no discernible policy," some said that it is "informal if there is one," and some said there was a "shared awareness."

Some managers believe implicit guidelines exist that are well-understood, but apparently this is not a widely shared view. Only one-fourth of the journalists who completed the questionnaire feel their newspaper has a unified editorial approach and even fewer believe their paper's policy reflects their views. Supervisory and nonsupervisory personnel did not differ in their attitudes on these questions. Both reported a lack of editorial unity and a disparity between their personal views and those of the newspaper. Their findings parallel those on the news priorities--agreement across ranks but the perception that one's own views differ from those of the organization (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

<u>Editorial Policy*</u>	Percent:	<u>Agree</u>	<u>In-Between</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Average</u>
This paper has a unified editorial approach.		25%	28%	47%	2.64**
The editorial policy of this paper usually reflects my views.		19%	32%	49%	2.51**
<u>Similarity of Values*</u>					
My superiors in this newspaper share my values.		36%	29%	35%	2.92
My superiors think like me.		30%	31%	39%	2.77**
* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). **Results differed significantly across locations.					

Journalists often have access to information and experiences not commonly shared with one another. This difference in frame of reference can cause conflicting viewpoints about editorial policy and the values which journalists assume. Journalists are equally divided in their opinions about whether or not their superiors share their values or think like they do. Approximately one-third felt they had values or thoughts similar to those of their superiors. Another third disagreed, and one third were undecided.

To explore this issue, we analyzed what factors contribute to perceptions of a unified editorial approach and of shared values among supervisors and subordinates. The results, summarized in Table 3.3, provide some intriguing insights.

Those journalists who perceive their newspapers as having a unified editorial approach and a shared value system are those who fall into the 25-34 year old age group, read their own paper more thoroughly, and hold a positive image of their paper as timely, involved in the community, influential and accurate. These journalists also spend more time reading other professional journals.

Top management and desk supervisors are more likely to feel that there is unity of approach at their newspapers than are reporters. And, as one would expect, those people who are experiencing conflict with their supervisors are less likely to hold perceptions of similarity of values. We also found location differences, primarily due to the size of the paper. Journalists who work at smaller papers feel they have more shared values and a more unified approach than those at the larger papers.

Knowledge of research is related: newspapers that encourage the use and dissemination of readership findings experience greater unity of editorial approach. (Here is further support for the paper described earlier that uses research findings to help formulate news values.) If journalists perceive that the readers hold values similar to their own, they are also more likely to view their editorial approach as unified.

Job mobility also plays a role. Journalists who have been promoted and who have held their current jobs for less than three years are more likely to perceive that their supervisors share their values and to approach the news in a similar fashion. This finding is consistent with the notion of insularity in communication patterns discussed previously. Those individuals who are upwardly mobile are likely to communicate more with management. This contact adds to their identification with the leadership, and consequently, their positive evaluation of editorial policies.

The absence of explicit editorial policies appears to have an impact on whether newspapers are more "reactive"--responding to daily events as they occur--or "proactive"--taking initiative in anticipating stories and making investigative assignments. Interviewees were asked whether they felt their paper as a whole was reactive or proactive in its approach to news-gathering. The responses from editors and reporters alike paralleled the comments about laissez-faire leadership style and lack of guidelines. Most journalists described their papers as reactive and attributed much of the reactivity to lack of direction and lack of time for planning.

Table 3.3

Predictors of a Unified Editorial Approach/Shared Value System		
Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized Beta Weights
1. Promotions*	If journalists have been promoted in the past 2 yrs., perceived unity of editorial approach and similarity of values <u>increases</u> .	-.25
2. Size of Paper*	Smaller papers perceive <u>more</u> unity in editorial approach and <u>more</u> shared values among supervisors and subordinates.	-.11
3. Reporters	Reporters are <u>least</u> likely to perceive that their supervisors share their values.	-.20
4. Desk editors	Editors are <u>more</u> likely to perceive that their supervisors share their values.	.17
5. Knowledge of Research	The <u>greater</u> the dissemination of research findings, the <u>higher</u> the perceived unity of editorial approach and similarity of values.	.13
6. Reading habits of journalists*	The <u>more</u> journalists read their own paper, the <u>more</u> likely they are to perceive a unified editorial approach and a shared value system.	-.09
7. Supervisor/Subordinate Conflict	The <u>more</u> conflict among supervisors and subordinates, the <u>less</u> likely journalists are to perceive a unified editorial approach or similarity of values.	-.24
8. Perceived Similarity of Reader	As journalists perceive themselves as <u>more</u> similar to their readers, the <u>more</u> likely they are to perceive a unified editorial approach and that their superiors share their values.	.20
9. Years in Job	If journalists have held their present job 3 yrs. or less, they are <u>more</u> likely to perceive a more unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.11
10. Image of Paper	As journalists perceive their paper to be more personal and involved in the community, they are <u>more</u> likely to perceive a unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.28

Table 3.3 cont.

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized Beta Weights
11. Reading Habits of Journalists	As journalists read <u>more</u> professional journals, they are <u>more</u> likely to perceive their own paper as having a unified editorial approach and a shared value system.	.09
12. Sensationalism	As journalists perceive their papers to be <u>less</u> sensationalist, they are <u>more</u> likely to perceive a unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.17
13. Image of Paper	As journalists perceive their own paper to be <u>more</u> timely, accurate and influential, they are <u>more</u> likely to perceive a unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.19
14. Location	There are location differences in perceptions of unity of editorial approach and similarity of values.	.11
15. Age	Journalists aged 25-34 are <u>more</u> likely to perceive a unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.08

Overall $R^2 = .45$ (R^2 corrected for shrinkage = .44)

Overall F due to regression = 29.49, df = 12, 427, $p < .001$

* These predictors were entered early in the stepwise regression and later removed. The regression coefficients for these predictors are those estimated at the step at which each one was entered.

This was especially true at the smaller papers. One respondent said, "The reactive approach is due to the attitudes of management--'don't bother' and our small staff size." Others spoke of inordinate time pressures that did not permit taking a more proactive stance. One smaller paper did indicate movement toward being more proactive: "Our move away from being reactive is caused by a new city desk and young reporters."

The larger papers tended to report a greater degree of initiative or progress in that direction. One location characterized itself as having become

50/50 between reactive and proactive after years of being strictly reactive. But there was still a recognized need to be more enterprising and anticipatory of news developments. Other locations told us that "reporters and editors both dig up stories." Because no one can cover all the bases at the larger locations, we were told that everyone becomes more aggressive to ensure that "nothing gets left out."

Those journalists who characterized the news-gathering at their papers as a more balanced approach usually explained it as a dichotomy. "Reporters are proactive and editors, reactive--at least that's how the reporters see it."

How Much Conflict is There Between Supervisors and Staff?

"If the person above me were generating ideas without forcing, I'd be twice as effective."

--A desk editor, 1981

"We need a little more adversarial relationship, more 'punches in the jaw.' Everyone is too nice."

--A section editor, 1981

"I give reporters too much rank. They know a whole lot more. I encourage editors to listen to reporters."

--A managing editor, 1981

"I'm aware of my role and aware when I do a poor job. All managers try not to overmanage."

--A managing editor, 1981

"In all hierarchies, over the years there is a tendency to appoint people who are pliable or mediocre, people who will not oppose, who will be loyal and easy to work with. It results in people not fit for the job."

--A reporter, 1981

"Ideas from the top stink."

--A reporter, 1981

Even though a minority of journalists in nonsupervisory roles believe their supervisors are similar to them, the perceived dissimilarity doesn't translate into conflict.

As noted in the previous section, only a third of the respondents perceive their supervisors think like them and share their values. One might, therefore, expect some friction between supervisors and subordinates. To probe this aspect of working relationships between news staffers and their supervisors, the survey asked respondents to assess whether they experience conflicts between their own views of how their work should be done and demands placed on them by others.

The results, presented in Table 3.4, reveal that only about a third felt they have a hard time satisfying conflicting demands from people they work with. Over half disagreed. As for conflicts with supervisors specifically, about as many (38%) said they differ with their supervisor on how things should be done as said they do not differ (36%). Results were similar across all locations.

Table 3.4

<u>Role Conflict*</u>	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	<u>Average</u>
I have a hard time satisfying the conflicting demands of people I work with.	33%	16%	51%	2.66
There is a difference between the way my supervisor thinks things should be done and the way I think they should be done.	38%	26%	36%	3.03

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

We conducted further analyses to determine what accounts for differing levels of role conflict. Roles reflect expectations that individuals have

about the way in which an occupant of a position should behave. When two people's expectations about how one or the other should behave differ substantially, there is role conflict. In the case of a supervisor and subordinate, differing perceptions of how the subordinate should carry out his or her job has implications for organizational effectiveness, as well as for the working relationship between the two individuals. In general, past research indicates that employees who experience role conflict are rated lower in performance and report lower levels of job satisfaction than those persons who are exposed to little or no role conflict.

The data support these conclusions (Table 3.5). When we analyzed what contributes to favorable supervisor/subordinate relations,¹ we found that if subordinates perceived their supervisors as similar in goals and values, conflict was low. Overall, those individuals who experience the greatest conflict tend to be more pessimistic about their paper, seeing it as declining in quality and influence and as losing its readers. Consistent with negative effects of job mobility, individuals who have not been promoted experience greater conflict.

As with shared values with supervisors, newspapers disseminating research have fewer reported conflicts. However, contrary to the similarity results, journalists who perceive themselves as similar to their readers report greater conflict with supervisors. One could speculate that journalists who are experiencing alienation within their own organizations will tend to identify with the dissatisfied reader, focusing blame for deficiencies on the newspaper and its management.

¹Our measure of supervisor/subordinate conflict combined the two items in Table 3.3 on role conflict plus two items from Table 3.1. The items were combined based on factor analysis results and represent compatibility in the supervisor/subordinate work relationship.

Table 3.5

Predictors of Supervisor/Subordinate Conflict		
Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized Beta Weights
1. Promotions*	Journalists who have been promoted in the past 2 years, perceive less supervisor/subordinate conflict.	-.13
2. Knowledge of* Research	As the paper encourages dissemination of research, perceived conflict between supervisors and subordinates <u>decreases</u> .	-.12
3. Shared Values with Supervisor	As subordinates perceive their supervisors to hold similar views, perceived conflict <u>decreases</u> .	-.32
4. Reader Satisfaction	As perceived reader satisfaction with the newspaper <u>decreases</u> , perceived subordinate/supervisor conflict <u>increases</u> .	-.20
5. Perceived Similarity	As journalists perceive themselves as <u>more</u> similar to readers, perceived supervisor/subordinate conflict <u>increases</u> .	.13
6. Image of Paper	As journalists perceive their own newspaper to be inaccurate, impersonal, noninfluential, untimely, and disrespected, perceived conflict among supervisors and subordinates <u>increases</u> .	-.13
7. Image of Paper	As journalists perceive their own newspaper to be dull, uncaring, and unrepresentative of the community, perceived conflict among supervisors and subordinates <u>increases</u> .	-.16
8. Location	There are location differences.	.15

Overall $R^2 = .31$ (R^2 corrected for shrinkage = .30)

Overall F due to Regression = 24.10; df = 8,431; $p < .001$

*This predictor was entered early in the stepwise regression and later removed. The regression coefficients for these predictors are those estimated at the step at which each one was entered.

Do Journalists Like their Work?

"I have too much thrown at me to try to keep track of
(It's a) high stress job. I love it but it's stressful."

--A section editor, 1981

"It is frustrating to see an incompetent change your work."

--A reporter, 1981

"The bureaucracy here is poor....They don't make good assignments. I don't feel I have control of my work."

--A reporter, 1981

"This place is understaffed."

--A desk editor, 1981

"(There is) not a senior position on the staff that has been stable for more than several months or at the most two years. This constant turnaround makes people make decisions that are detrimental to the product."

--A reporter, 1981

"(Turnover has a) dramatic and pervasive effect. There is a reluctance to make decisions."

--A reporter, 1981

"When management finds that they don't like somebody, or they don't like the work they're doing for one reason or another... they'll move them until the person gets so dissatisfied they'll leave....Because of the unions they can't out and out fire anyone."

--A reporter, 1981

News people like to complain about their work, but they love it even though it causes stress.

The vast majority reported that they view their jobs as satisfying, pleasant, good, useful, and challenging. Four out of five said their jobs provided them with a sense of accomplishment, and most characterized their work as fascinating and creative. They also seemed to feel their work is considered in a positive light by other people. More than three-quarters of the journalists surveyed agreed that the terms "important" and "respected" accurately described their jobs (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6

Summary of Job Satisfaction Responses					
Descriptor	Percent replying:	Yes	?	No	
Useful		93%	5%	2%	*
Good		91%	6%	3%	
Gives sense of accomplishment		83%	7%	10%	
Challenging		82%	4%	14%	
Important		81%	12%	7%	
Satisfying		80%	9%	11%	
Creative		80%	9%	11%	
Respected		78%	13%	9%	
Pleasant		71%	15%	14%	
High pressure		66%	8%	26%	
Frustrating		62%	13%	25%	*
Fascinating		59%	13%	28%	
Endless		57%	11%	32%	
Routine		41%	8%	52%	
Tiresome		35%	13%	52%	
Boring		15%	7%	79%	*
Healthful		13%	28%	59%	*
Simple		12%	4%	84%	*

* Results differed significantly across locations.

While it is apparent from these opinions that journalists have some positive feelings about their work, it is also clear that they see some trade-off. Job related tension was one frequently mentioned negative factor: 66% of the sample viewed their job as high pressure, 62% described their job as frustrating and 57% said it was endless. A number of journalists attributed the cause of this source of stress to constant deadlines and time pressure.

The notion that job-related stress is often the cause of illness is becoming widely documented in the health professions. Journalists judging their own jobs indicated that they felt their work took a toll in terms of their own health. When asked if their jobs might be described as healthful, 59% overall said no. Three related negative attributes varied across locations: healthful, frustrating and boring.

One possible cause of these feelings is the electronic data processing equipment which has recently become as synonymous with journalism as the portable typewriter once was. Complaints about the eye strain and other forms of physical fatigue were common at all newspapers surveyed. Unexpectedly, VDTs were held responsible for another source of strain. Several reporters described their feelings of helplessness and frustration after having lost a story because a computer went down. Others indicated that a shortage of terminals was a source of tension among staffers.

In the long history of research on attitudes toward work, one of the most consistent observations has been that persons in higher levels of the organization tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than persons at lower levels. This is typically explained by the fact that as movement is made toward the top of the hierarchy, jobs offer increased amounts of challenge, autonomy, and variety. To see if this relationship held for journalists, results were again examined by rank in the status hierarchy. Statistical analysis revealed a weak, but statistically reliable, relationship between level and satisfaction with work. While journalists overall evaluated their jobs positively, the most

intense attitudes, both negative and positive, were exhibited by upper management. Publishers, managing editors, executive editors, more than any other group, described their jobs as important and challenging. These same people also more often considered their jobs as routine, high pressure, and not healthful than individuals lower in the hierarchy (see Table 3.7).

Table 3.7

Position in Newspaper	Job described as . . .					
	High Pressure	Not Healthful	Endless	Routine	Important	Challenging
Reporters, copy editors, columnists, photographers	62%	57%	35%	46%	77%	79%
Supervising editors (section, desk, assistants)	72%	58%	18%	65%	89%	90%
Managing editors, executive editors, publishers	92%	79%	28%	71%	96%	93%

Supervising editors displayed a pattern similar to upper management, but to a lesser degree. Staff employees, on the other hand, differed substantially from either group.

To determine what other aspects of journalistic life were associated with work satisfaction, predictors of job satisfaction were identified (see Table 3.8).¹ Two important conclusions emerged. First, certain groups of newspaper employees, identifiable in terms of attitudes and demographic characteristics, are more satisfied than others. Second, the role of the supervisor in providing

¹A series of items designed to measure satisfaction with work were taken from the Job Descriptive Index by P.C. Smith, L.M. Kendall and C.L. Hulin, The measurement of Satisfaction in Work and Retirement. Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1969). Initially, responses to these items were examined individually. Later, fifteen items were combined to form a composite work satisfaction index. The criterion for the item inclusion was a positive item-to-total correlation of .30 or greater.

Table 3.8

Predictors of Satisfaction with Work

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized Beta Weight
1. Promotion*	Persons receiving more promotions are <u>more</u> satisfied with their jobs.	.13
2. Age*	Persons in the 35 to 44 age bracket are least satisfied; otherwise, satisfaction <u>increases</u> with age.	.11
3. Reading of Own Paper	The <u>more</u> thoroughly a person reads his/her own paper the <u>more</u> satisfaction with the job.	.12
4. Knowledge of Research	As dissemination of research <u>increases</u> , satisfaction with work <u>increases</u> .	.11
5. Supervisor Subordinate Relations	Persons who receive clear consistent directives and are permitted autonomy in their work express <u>more</u> satisfaction.	.35
6. Years in Present Job	As time in job <u>increases</u> , satisfaction with work <u>increases</u> .	.08
7. Similarity with Supervisor	As perceptions of similarity between supervisor and subordinate <u>increase</u> , satisfaction <u>increases</u> .	.08
8. Image	Persons who see their own newspaper as personal, lively, and interesting report being <u>more</u> satisfied.	.15
9. Image	The more a newspaper is seen as accurate, respected, and influential, the <u>higher</u> the degree of satisfaction.	.09

Overall $R^2 = .28$ (R^2 corrected for shrinkage = .27)
 Overall F due to regression = 27.41; df = 6,433; $p < .001$

*These predictors were entered early in the stepwise regression and later removed. The regression coefficients for these predictors are those estimated at the step at which each one was entered.

direction as well as encouraging participation in decision-making is of major importance.

Demographically, age is associated with an individual's work satisfaction. Persons in the 35-44 age group expressed the least satisfaction with their work; older and younger groups were more satisfied. Those who had held their jobs three years or longer also said that they liked their work significantly more than those who were comparatively new to their jobs. Job change in the form of promotion similarly produced positive effects on journalists' feelings about their jobs. Employees who reported having been promoted within the last two years said that they were more satisfied with their work.

The significance of the supervisor-subordinate interaction made itself clear in several ways. Journalists who said that they received conflicting information about how to do their jobs expressed the highest degree of dissatisfaction. Conversely, supervisors who permitted their employees to exercise autonomy in regard to their own job had the most satisfied subordinates. In short, journalists seem to be saying that they enjoy freedom to make decisions about their work but also want clear direction from their boss as to exactly what he or she wants done. Additionally, those individuals who viewed their boss as similar to themselves reported higher levels of satisfaction.

Another interesting influence on work satisfaction is exposure to research. Newspapers that encourage the dissemination of current research findings among the staff had more satisfied employees. Also, individuals who believed that current research conducted on the newspaper industry affected newsroom decisions reported higher levels of work satisfaction.

Job satisfaction was positively associated with journalists' perceptions of their own papers. Those who perceived their own newspaper as personal,

lively, and interesting were among the most satisfied. Similarly, the more a newspaper was seen as accurate, respected, and influential, the more positively the newsroom employees tended to view their job.

Attitudes toward work were related to journalists' media habits as well. The fact that satisfied employees read their paper more thoroughly than less satisfied journalists is consistent with their image of the paper as a sound product.

At this point it should be clear that an individual's attitudes toward work are influenced by a variety of factors. Some of these influences, such as age group, are relatively fixed. Other factors, however, may be influenced by the management of a paper. One potential means of increasing employee satisfaction is alteration of the management style of the immediate supervisor, broadening opportunities for greater participation. Another is increasing the availability of newspaper research findings in the newsroom. Interviews revealed that most newsroom employees rarely had contact with newspaper research. Many felt that upper management, either by design or through neglect, did not share the research information with them. The data from this study suggest that a change in this practice might have positive effects on journalists' attitudes toward their work.

THE READER IN THE MIND'S EYE OF THE JOURNALIST

It was noted in the section on the communication lives of working journalists that many lack familiarity with or hold ambivalent attitudes toward the reader. Yet most journalists claim the reader is their focal point in deciding what is newsworthy and most reporters claim to write for the "average reader." Consequently, it becomes important to know in more detail just what conception journalists hold of the reading audience.

A major portion of the project explored just that. Some survey questions dealt with perceived levels of readership, some, with perceived satisfaction, and some, with the presumed effects of newspapers on readers. Additionally, the interviews probed perceptions of readers in the process of exploring what is news and in questions about newspaper influence on public opinion. Because news people's conceptions of the reader could be based on a number of sources, including data from readership surveys, information reported in academic journals and the trade press, prevailing attitudes in their own newsrooms, views carried with them from their journalistic training, or their own conversations with local readers, we also attempted to assess how such sources of information affected judgments.

How Do People Use Media?

"The audience is not well enough educated to take advantage of the newspaper."

-- A reporter, 1981

"Reading is down because of the public's laziness."

-- A section editor, 1981

"People don't read soft features as much as generally thought."

-- A reporter, 1981

"People are turned off by news. That's why it's important to have fluff on the front page."

-- A reporter, 1981

"The American people are not as dumb as a lot of us in the business have believed. The American people really can stay awake longer than 90 seconds; the American people really do care about such subjects as inflation, nuclear disarmament and the like."

-- Jim Lehrer of the PBS MacNeil-Lehrer Report, in a panel address to news executives, Washington, D.C., December 14, 1981

News people underestimate their readers' dependence on newspapers, especially for hard news, and overestimate the public's use of television and interest in fluff.

Staffers were asked to estimate the proportion of adults in their metropolitan area who read their newspaper on an average day. The overall sample produced a perceived readership level of 51% (see Table 4.1). About one-fourth estimated that 30% or less read their paper on an average day, and one-fourth thought that at least 70% read the newspaper. The national average is 67%.

By location, news people's estimates varied from 35% perceived readership in a large metropolitan site to 64% in a small-town locale. Comparison to actual circulation figures available in each of the eight locations revealed these estimates generally to be too conservative.

One exception was one location where overestimates based on misinformation had an impact on other attitudes and behaviors in that newsroom. In the personal interviews, the news staff consistently reported that they must be doing an excellent job in the community because they knew that over 90% of the community was reading their product on a daily basis. The estimate was believed by everyone from top managers to the newest reporter. Actual daily

readership was closer to 60% of the community. By some manner, an entire newsroom was basing its behavior on a myth. The result was that many of the people interviewed had no real idea about how their product could better serve its market nor were they very self-critical about how their work could be improved.

A second question asked journalists to estimate the proportion of local readers who had read the newspaper on all five weekdays "last week." The overall estimate was 40%, indicating news people recognize that a sizable segment of the audience does not read the paper faithfully every day.

Asked to estimate the average amount of time the reader spends with the newspaper daily, journalists again gave a conservative estimate. They calculated that the typical reader devotes 24 minutes per day to the newspaper, whereas the national norm is around 35 to 40 minutes, as measured in readership surveys. Only one-tenth of the respondents estimated that readers spend more than a half hour with the paper; most think it is 20 minutes or less. Such underestimates reflect a cynicism about the reading public that was also frequently expressed in the in-depth interviews. Many respondents, when asked why people are reading less often, said, "because they're lazy" or "because they can't read well enough."

Two other questions that probed perceived reading habits asked what proportion of readers read all of a typical front-page hard news article and what proportion read just the first few paragraphs but do not finish the entire story. The journalists estimated that 31% read all of a typical hard news story while an average of 58% probably read only part of a typical front-page hard news item. The combined percentages indicate two interesting tendencies: Journalists perceive front-page story readership to be extremely high among readers (89%) but they also believe that the majority actually discontinue reading before finishing the whole article. Actual readership of hard news

items is probably not as widespread as perceived by our respondents; some research indicates that much less than half of the newspaper reading audience reads all or part of a typical hard news item.

Table 4.1

	Journalists' Estimates of Public Media Exposure	National Estimates of Public Media Exposure
Proportion of adults in area who read the newspaper on an average day	51%	67%
Proportion who read the news- paper all five weekdays <u>last</u> <u>week</u>	40%	
Proportion of readers who read all of typical front page hard news item	31%	
Proportion of readers who read only part of typical front page hard news item	58%	
	89%	less than 50%*
Average minutes per day reader spends with newspaper	24	35 - 40*
Proportion of adults in area who watch any dinnertime net- work TV newscasts on average weekday	63%	less than 50%*

* Based on audience surveys, reading and noting, and/or diary studies. Because methods and time frames differ considerably across types of audience studies, precise figures are not possible.

Table 4.2 shows the significant relationships between readership conceptions and various journalist characteristics and behaviors. Eight factors were considered that might shape the estimates of reader exposure patterns: (1) exposure to professional publications, such as Journalism Quarterly, Editor and Publisher, and public opinion polls, (2) exposure to surveys reporting readership data for their newspaper and trust in these readership studies, (3) contact with readers,

including discussion of news events and exchange of opinions with non-journalists, and involvement with a variety of people in the community, (4) similarity to readers in terms of shared definition of news and overlap in values, (5) years in journalism (6) status of position, ranging from reporter or copy editor to supervising editor to managing editor or publisher, (7) years of education at the college level, and (8) sex.

Table 4.2

Significant Correlations Among Journalist Characteristics and Perceptions of Media Exposure *						
	Proportion who read newspaper	Proportion who read full story	Minutes reading per day	"Hard news" interest	"Soft news" interest	Feature interest
Exposure to profes- sional publications	+.11					
Exposure to surveys	+.22	+.18		+.13		+.12
Reported contact with readers						
Perceived similar- ity to readers	+.12					
Years in journalism			+.17		-.11	
Status of position						
Years of education	-.13	-.14				
Sex (male-female)					+.14	+.19

* Only significant ($p < .01$) correlations have been tabled. A (+) sign means that as the row variable increases, so does the column variable. A (-) sign means that as the row variable increases, the column variable decreases. Larger numbers mean stronger relationships.

Those with greater exposure to publications and readership surveys give higher estimates of the proportion of the public reading their newspaper. Exposure to surveys is also associated with a higher perceived proportion of

readers fully consuming the typical front page hard news story. Journalists who perceive that readers are similar to them tend to estimate that a higher proportion read their paper. As the level of education increases, the estimated proportions of readers and full article reading are lower. It is noteworthy that supervisors' and subordinates' estimates do not differ. The number of years working as a journalist does not make a difference, either (although it does on some other estimates to be discussed below).

The news people were also asked to calculate exposure levels to newspapers' chief competitor, television news. They estimated that network and local TV news outdraws newspapers. On the average, the print journalists believe that 63% of the adults in their community watch the evening network news each day, and that 64% watch a local newscast (see Table 4.1). Audience surveys reveal these estimates to be rather high, as less than half of the public views television news programs on a typical day.¹ Furthermore, the journalists tend to believe that television is suppressing newspaper reading. In response to the statement, "People who watch a lot of TV news are less likely to read the newspaper," 54% agree, 31% disagree, and the other 15% are in-between. In reality, research evidence shows that those who watch TV news more often are avid newspaper readers. These misperceptions may reflect an insecurity about the threat of electronic journalism and a cynicism about the public's taste for spoon-fed, visual-oriented news. Apparently, TV is feared as providing the easy way out for a lazy public. Said one interviewee, "...like everything else, who's going to make pasta from scratch when they can buy it in a carton." From another came this remark: "People aren't turned off by the newspaper. It is a simple case of it's easier to turn on the television."

¹See Leo Bogart, *Press and Public: Who Reads What, When, Where, and Why in American Newspapers*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981; George Comstock, Steven Chaffee, Natan Katzman, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Roberts, *Television and Human Behavior* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) and Robert L. Stevenson and Kathryn P. White, "The Cumulative Audience of Network Television News," *Journalism Quarterly*, 1982, 57, 477-481.

Another set of questions examined the types of news stories journalists perceive readers to follow most closely. Respondents were asked to estimate what proportion of readers are "very interested" in eighteen categories of news. The average interest levels ranged from a high of 64% for sports to a low of 28% for religion, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

<u>Percent Very Interested</u>	<u>Newspaper Topic</u>
64%	Sports
61%	Celebrities and personalities
60%	Accidents and disasters
60%	General local news
59%	Crime news
53%	General human interest (non-local)
52%	Economic news and issues (cost of living, taxes)
50%	Consumer information and advice
47%	National government news
45%	Education and schools
44%	Fashion, society, food, and home
43%	International news (wars, diplomacy)
42%	State and local government news
42%	Social problems and protests
38%	Business and finance
37%	Environment and energy
36%	Science, invention, and space
28%	Religion

Beyond sports, journalists see readers as being most interested in soft news features such as celebrities and general human interest, sensational topics such as accidents and crime, nongovernmental local news, and pragmatically useful information such as consumer information and food. News people give the reader less credit for interest in national and international news, social issues, environmental and technological news, and business.

These perceptions of journalists can be contrasted with findings from surveys of actual reader interest.¹ Since these norms are not precise or generalizable to each locale, only major discrepancies will be highlighted. When both males and females are taken into account, journalists overestimate by far the interest in sports content. They also overstate interest in non-governmental local news, fashion, food, society and homemaker topics and celebrities and personalities.

On the other hand, news people substantially underestimate audience interest in national government news and stories about environment and energy. Four other hard news categories are slightly underrated: international news, economic news, education and schools, and science. Clearly, the journalists' picture of the reader is less complimentary than actuality, as they downplay reader interest in substantive matters and exaggerate the appetite for superficial material.

Some correlates of news interests appeared in the preceding Table 4.2 above. For this analysis, indices were computed for three categories of news. "Hard news" summed such topics as general local news, economic news, government news, education news, international news, environment news, and science news. "Soft news" included such topics as celebrities and general human interest. Interest in consumer information, religion coverage, business reports, the sports page, and the fashion section were combined into a feature news category. Staffers with greater exposure to readership surveys give higher estimates of interest in hard news and features. Long-time news people see less interest in soft news. Female journalists perceive more interest in

¹For more detail, see Michael Burgoon, Judee K. Burgoon and Miram Wilkinson, "Dimensions and Readership of Newspaper Content," Newspaper Research Journal, 1981, 3, 74-93, and Judee K. Burgoon, Michael Burgoon and Miriam Wilkinson, "Dimensions of Content Readership in Ten Newspaper Markets," Journalism Quarterly, 1983, in press.

soft news and features. The estimates of managers are nearly identical to those of junior staffers, although senior people assign higher interest to general local news, consumer advice, and religion. No other factors are significantly related to these perceptions.

Another facet of the questionnaire measured perceptions of who reads the paper. The journalists were asked to identify which demographic subgroups of the population read the newspaper most frequently (see Table 4.4). Regarding age level, almost all realized that the under-30 year olds are not the heaviest readers. However, somewhat more thought that the middle age group (30-49 years old) read most, whereas actual readership figures show the older segment of society being the most frequent readers. The same pattern occurs for income, as the journalists correctly perceived that lower income people (under \$15,000) are least likely to read but many inaccurately estimated that the middle income people read more than those with incomes above the \$25,000 level. For educational subgroups, only one quarter of the sample correctly estimated that the college graduates are the heaviest readers; many felt that people with some college read most frequently.

Table 4.4

Journalists' Estimates of the Subpopulations Who Read the Newspaper the Most					
		<u>cf</u> <u>/n</u>		<u>%</u>	
AGE:	18-29	1	EDUCATION:	High School	16
	30-49	54		Some College	41
	50+	39		College Graduate	26
	Equal	6		Equal	17
INCOME:	Under \$15,000	2	SEX:	Males	23
	\$15-25,000	50		Females	10
	Over \$25,000	39		Equal	67
	Equal	9			
RACE:	Whites	89	LENGTH OF RESIDENCE:	One Year	1
	Minorities	0		Two to Ten Years	36
	Equal	11		Ten Years or More	38
				Equal	25

The conceptions of readership demography were most accurate for sex and race. Most perceived that males and females read to a similar degree, and almost all thought that whites read more than minorities. Journalists also tended to believe that longer-term residents read most frequently or that length of residence was not related to readership; very few thought that newcomers to the community are the heaviest readers. The estimated demographic differences in reading patterns were very similar between managers and staffers, and no other background characteristics were significantly related.

Are Readers Satisfied with Newspapers?

"I can't help but feel that the role of the community newspaper in our society is in better shape than many newswatchers around the country would have us believe."

-- Jim Geeham, former editor and publisher of the Tucson Citizen, in a panel address to news executives, Washington, DC, December 14, 1981

"Newspaper trust is suffering."

-- A section editor, 1981

"Credibility is our biggest problem."

-- A section editor, 1981

News people have mixed feelings about whether the public trusts the newspaper and they don't believe the public is highly satisfied with their product.

To assess perceived reader satisfaction with their paper, journalists indicated on a 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) scale how they thought their readers would rate them on overall satisfaction, satisfaction with international/national news coverage and satisfaction with local news coverage (see Table 4.5). A majority (56%) of the journalists thought their readers would give them positive ratings while 22% thought they would receive below average scores. Overall, they gave themselves a 3.24 rating, which is

rather low, but it varied considerably by market, with a low estimate of 2.95 and a high of 3.70. As for international and national coverage, they gave themselves a slightly higher 3.34 and for local coverage, a 3.32. Although precise standards of comparison are lacking in each locale, readership surveys have shown most newspapers to earn ratings from their readers of 3.2 to 3.8. This suggests that the journalists may be underestimating satisfaction levels to some extent.

Table 4.5

Estimates of Reader Satisfaction	Percent:	Dissatisfied (2.5 or less)	In-Between (3.0)	Satisfied (3.5 or better)	Average
Readers' overall satisfaction with the newspaper		22%	22%	56%	3.24
Readers' satisfaction with coverage of national and international news		24%	19%	57%	3.34
Readers' satisfaction with coverage of local news		27%	15%	58%	3.32

*Respondents have the following choices: 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0.

In the in-depth interviews, news people were asked what parts of their community they thought they were serving most and least well and with which parts of the paper they thought readers were most and least satisfied. Respondents had some difficulty making these assessments. Many identified minority groups, the very young or very old and nonsuburbanites as those being least well served. Although some people were convinced that their paper serves all segments of the community equally well, others were inclined to say that those people who are most similar to them--i.e., the middle class--should find the newspaper most suited to their interests and needs. Said one, "The paper is aimed at fictitious middle America."

As for satisfying or unsatisfying parts of the newspaper itself, each location produced different responses. Each focused on the sections of the paper that had recently undergone improvement or that were believed to be major attractions for readers. Business coverage, sports and features sections received frequent mentions. Areas mentioned most often for not being covered satisfactorily included local news about local people, especially things like wedding announcements and social events, and national and world news.

An analysis of what contributes to news people believing readers are satisfied or dissatisfied showed that those who have greater exposure to research surveys believe readers are more satisfied (correlation = $+0.26$). Those journalists who are most familiar with readership studies recognize that the audience is relatively more satisfied. No other factors, such as position at the newspaper or length of experience in the industry, are significantly related to estimates of reader satisfaction.

Perceived reader evaluations were further assessed through expressions of agreement or disagreement with three statements. As can be seen in Table 4.6 below, nearly half of the journalists believe readers have greater confidence and trust in newspapers than TV, and a majority think their newspaper is seen as fair and accurate. Most also reveal confidence in their news product through rejection of the notion that people only read the paper because there is no alternative.

Familiarity with readership survey findings is the journalist characteristic that is significantly related to these items. Those who have greater exposure to research express greater faith in the credibility of their paper by the readers: There is a $+0.12$ correlation with an index combining the trust and fairness items, and a -0.19 correlation for the no-alternative statement.

Table 4.6

<u>Perceived Reader Evaluation</u>	Percent: <u>(4 or 5)</u>	<u>In-Between</u> <u>(3)</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>(1 or 2)</u>	<u>Average</u>
The public has more confidence and trust in our newspaper than in television news.	48%	30%	22%	3.32
Most readers trust the fairness and accuracy of the news carried in our newspaper.	53%	30%	17%	3.43
People read our newspaper because they have no alternative.	32%	15%	53%	2.61
*Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).				

On the whole, these replies, while generally expressing positiveness, reflect a tentativeness and some degree of pessimism about the public's view of their paper that is probably unwarranted, at least according to an extremely large number of readership surveys. This underestimation of public regard becomes more apparent in interviewees' comments about the causes of nonreadership, to be discussed in a later section.

Do Newspapers Influence Readers?

"This paper sets the news agenda for this town."

-- An editor, 1981

"If something is played up, it becomes important to readers."

-- A reporter, 1981

"Editorials help readers to understand, but they don't move people."

-- A reporter, 1981

"Campaign endorsements aren't that important -- people don't take the newspaper into the voting booth."

-- A reporter, 1981

"(We are) totally influential. Newspapers are gospel here."

-- A reporter, 1981

News people believe their coverage of news events substantially influences the public.

Two items in the survey tapped journalists' conceptions of newspaper influence on the audience (Table 4.7). By a four-to-one margin, they agree that their newspaper has an important impact on the formation of political and social attitudes. An even larger majority feels that the way the newspaper plays the news shapes the public's priorities regarding the importance of issues, leaders and events. Both of these widespread perceptions are in line with recent research evidence demonstrating the political impact of newspapers and the role newspapers play in setting the public's agenda of important subjects, but the degree of perceived effects may be somewhat inflated.

Table 4.7

Perceived Influence	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
The way the newspaper plays the news influences the public's priorities regarding which issues, leaders, and events are considered important.	73%	14%	8%	3.97
Our newspaper has an important impact on the attitudes readers form toward political and social issues.	89%	27%	15%	3.53
*Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).				

Two journalist characteristics are significantly related to estimates of sizable newspaper influence. Exposure to readership research correlates +.20 with an index composed of the two influence items. In addition, there is a +.18 correlation between the index and the amount of informal contact with readers. Thus, the greater the amount of feedback about the reactions of the readers, the greater the perceived impact of newspapers on the public. For the item dealing with impact on political attitudes, editors are significantly more likely to agree than are subordinates.

These perceptions of impact are echoed in the in-depth interviews. Said one, "The newspaper is a loaded gun." Interviewees were questioned further on the role newspapers play in influencing public opinion on local issues. Importantly, many distinguished between the sizable impact that comes from how the news is played as compared to the lesser impact exercised by editorials. Regarding the latter, one journalist told us, "No one has much of an impact anymore. You run the risk of becoming a common scold."

What Do Journalists Think of Readers?

"Reporters tend not to be who the readers are."

--An editor, 1981

"There is a lack of one-to-one correspondence between readers' and journalists' definitions of salience and newsworthiness."

--An editor, 1981

"The reader of today is far more intelligent...He knows more... Today there is so much more to write about and the reader is hungry for it."

-- A managing editor, 1981

"There is functional illiteracy among readers...."

-- A reporter, 1981

"It is necessary to explicitly put the news into context -- otherwise the readers won't understand."

-- A section editor, 1981

A majority of journalists appear to hold a patronizing and unflattering view of their readers.

Previous sections of this report have identified some pejorative views of what the public is able and willing to understand about the news. An analysis of further audience conceptions corroborates this interpretation.

Conceptions of audience interest and sophistication were measured with a series of statements to which the sample could agree or disagree (see Table 4.8). Responses were indicated on a 1 to 5 scale, where a score of 5 represents strong agreement, and a 1 means strong disagreement.

Table 4.8

Reader Perception Statements*	Percent:	Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
Readers are more interested in the day's breaking news than in analysis of long-term trends.		61%	23%	16%	3.62
The attractiveness of layout and graphics in the newspaper is important to most readers.		51%	25%	24%	3.36
Most readers can't distinguish local enterprise stories from wire service stories.		41%	24%	35%	3.10
The majority of readers have little interest in reading about social problems such as racial discrimination and poverty.		35%	31%	34%	2.97
The majority of newspaper readers are more interested in hard news items than in soft news and features.		29%	35%	36%	2.93
Women less often read hard news coverage than do men.		29%	28%	43%	2.73
"News of record" such as engagements, divorces, and court activities is no longer of high interest to readers.		29%	17%	54%	2.58
Most readers of the newspaper read the editorial page regularly.		15%	26%	59%	2.38
Most readers prefer to read a few in-depth stories than a number of shorter items.		8%	19%	73%	2.09
Our readers are gullible and easily fooled.		8%	15%	77%	1.89
*Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).					

Less than three in ten believe that people prefer to read hard news stories over soft news stories, a belief contrary to research findings on audience interest and readership patterns. Other negative views of the reader appear in the plurality who agree that readers can't distinguish local enterprise from wire stories, the modest proportion who take exception to the statement that people have little interest in stories about social problems, and the high percentage of journalists who endorse or fail to reject the stereotypic notion of women reading hard news content less than men. These beliefs are inconsistent with research findings on audience behaviors. Most journalists do recognize that not everyone reads the editorial page. Although they may be overly pessimistic about the regularity of readership. Likewise, they recognize that news of record is still of interest and that attractiveness is important to the reader. They also recognize the reader's preference for breaking news and briefer stories but they may be underestimating the demand that also exists for in-depth analysis of long-term trends and issues.

Again, editors, reporters and other staffers share very similar views on these issues, the one exception being that reporters more often feel readers have lost interest in news of record. Those who have been in the profession longer, however, hold more sexist views about women's readership of hard news. They also express the least faith in the public's ability to distinguish wire copy from locally produced copy and give lower estimates of readership of the editorial page, stories about social problems and news of record. The veterans, then, are in some ways the most cynical.

While 76% of the journalists surveyed at least disagreed with the statement that "readers are gullible and easily fooled," far too many express beliefs that the public is unsophisticated and plebian in its tastes. As one person put it, "There are things they should read but won't. You have to convince them and make them want to read it." Giving in to reader desires, according to these journalists, "would result in a reduction of quality."

"We are not selling soap. We have a responsibility not to dilute quality," summarized one editor. Another agreed, "We have a responsibility that transcends marketing considerations."

That responsibility is interpreted to mean serving as a gatekeeper in deciding what the public needs to know, whether they want to know it or not. "We are surrogates for presumed readers -- we are the satisfier and arbiters of public taste," said one editor. As will be seen, such attitudes can also lead to a rejection of readership research as a way of knowing about readers. As one journalist aptly summed up this viewpoint, "Reporters know best."

To provide a more precise analysis of the factors related to perceived sophistication of readers, an index was created to represent the conception of readers as discriminating, serious, and worldly. A high score on this index indicates agreement that readers are interested in hard news, in-depth stories, and editorial page matter, and disagreement with statements that readers can't distinguish enterprise stories, that they have little interest in reading about social problems, that readers are gullible, and that women read less hard news.

The same variables were used from the previous analyses of reading patterns. There is a $-.14$ correlation between perceived sophistication and length of time as a journalist, reinforcing the previous conclusion that veteran news people hold a less flattering picture of the reader. Female journalists see readers as somewhat more sophisticated than do male journalists. Those who read more professional publications tend to conceive of readers as more sophisticated, with a significant correlation of $+.11$. There is also a $+.10$ association between perceived sophistication and exposure to readership surveys. None of the other journalist characteristics is significantly related.

One apparent reason for the condescending attitude expressed by many news people is that they see themselves as different from the public. The survey

asked respondents how similar they feel they are to their readers (Table 4.9). The results reveal that only 30% of journalists questioned believe readers share their values and an even smaller 23% agree that readers "think like me." On news definitions specifically, far less than half believe that readers hold somewhat or very similar opinions. The vast majority see themselves as dissimilar or "in-between" similar and dissimilar to their readers. This tends to contribute to an elitist view among some. As one editor explained it, "It is an inherent problem, inbred--newspapers don't trust the people they are writing about."

Table 4.9

<u>Attitude Statement</u>	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	<u>Average</u>
The readers of this newspaper share my values.	30%	50%	20%	3.11
The readers think like me.	23%	43%	33%	2.85
	Percent: Similar (1 or 2)	In-Between (3)	Dissimilar (4 or 5)	<u>Average</u>
To what extent do you think readers share your definition of what is newsworthy? (1 = very similar, 5 = very dissimilar)	43%	32%	24%	2.70

To explore what other demographic and attitudinal factors might relate to journalists feeling similar or dissimilar to the readers, correlations were computed between perceived similarity and such things as beliefs about reader media use, beliefs about reader sophistication, amount of contact with the public, and the journalist's own background. The less experienced journalists tend to see the greatest dissimilarity between themselves and readers. There is a +.20 correlation between the number of years a person has worked in the industry and perceived similarity. Those who have more wide-ranging and frequent contacts with the public, by contrast, see themselves as more similar to the reader (correlation = +.18). Other background characteristics of

the journalist, such as education, do not make a difference. Neither does position at the newspaper (supervisory or nonsupervisory) nor location. Thus most journalists, and especially younger ones, see themselves as somewhat unlike their readers; communicating with the public begins to reverse this perception.

THE JOURNALIST AS MEDIA CONSUMER

Much of what news people know about the world about them comes from exposure to the mass media, including their own newspaper, other news media and professional publications. Furthermore, they may use these sources to formulate conceptions about what subjects are newsworthy and how certain topics should be reported. Thus, it is important to ascertain the personal exposure patterns of journalists to such sources of information.

What Media Do Journalists Personally Use?

Information suppliers are information addicts.

Three-fourths of news people reported reading all or most of their own newspaper. When asked, "How thoroughly do you read your newspaper each day," one-eighth reported reading all of it and another two-thirds said they read most of it. Those working in the industry more than 10 years were the most thorough readers. Editors and reporters did not differ in their reported thoroughness of reading.

News staffers read an average of two newspapers other than their own. There is considerable variation in amount of readership, as some do not read any other papers and others read five or more (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

<u>Number of Other Newspapers Read</u>	<u>Supervisors/ Editors</u>	<u>Reporters/ Copy Editors</u>
0	9%	13%
1	20%	24%
2	25%	31%
3	25%	16%
4	11%	8%
5+	10%	8%

Clearly, news people are much more exposed to newspapers than are non-journalists. Less than a quarter of the public reads more than one paper, while more than half of the news people read at least three papers including

their own. As the table above shows, editors read a greater range of other newspapers, compared to reporters. Many journalists read one of the major "national" newspapers, including one-fourth who report reading the New York Times and one-seventh who read the Wall Street Journal.

Newspaper people also said they watched television news relatively frequently. Nine out of 10 journalists reported watching some national network news each week, and a fourth reported watching at least six days for an average number of days of 3.5. Local TV news viewing was somewhat higher at an average of 4.0 days per week. One-third reported viewing local news six or seven days. TV news viewing was the same regardless of rank, but longer-term employees watched somewhat more than those who have worked 10 or fewer years in the industry. Those with relatively less formal education also watched the news more frequently.

Respondents reported reading an average of 6.0 different magazines a month. A fourth reported reading eight or more magazines, and the vast majority read at least two periodicals. The most frequently read magazines among news personnel are listed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

<u>Percent Who Read</u>	<u>Magazine</u>
40%	<u>Time</u>
35%	<u>Newsweek</u>
13%	<u>National Geographic</u>
11%	<u>New Yorker</u>
10%	<u>Esquire</u>
9%	<u>U.S. News and World Report</u>

Editors read an average of 6.8 magazines, compared to 5.7 for reporters. However, there were no differences in reading of news magazines specifically.

Examining the exposure patterns across these media, there are several positive relationships. Those who are exposed to one source tend to attend

to other sources as well. In particular, there is a very close relationship between the frequency of viewing national news and local news ($r = +.77$). Those who read their own newspaper most closely also tend to read a larger number of other newspapers ($r = +.18$) and watch TV news more often ($r = +.17$). Likewise, those who read more newspapers watch more TV news ($r = +.14$) and read more magazines ($r = +.20$), and those who watch more TV news read more news magazines ($r = +.16$).

Two other factors are related to personal media habits. Journalists who have the greatest amount of interpersonal contact with non-journalists read their own paper more closely ($r = +.20$), read more other papers ($r = +.17$), watch TV news more often ($r = +.12$), and read more news magazines ($r = +.13$). Those who read more professional publications also have greater exposure to the mass media ($r = +.25$ for own paper, $r = +.33$ for other paper reading, $r = +.14$ for national news and $r = .31$ for news magazines).

Considering newspapers, television, and magazines, journalists are far above the national norms for exposure to mass media information. In particular, they are extensively exposed to the print media. Thus, they have ample opportunity to keep up with the major developments in society to provide a basis for judging and reporting the news.

Do They Read Professional Publications?

Journalists keep abreast of trends in public opinion by reading poll results but are much less likely to read readership research reports. A variety of periodicals carry trade and research information relevant to the journalism profession. The survey questionnaire listed key titles or categories of publication, asking each respondent to indicate which were read on a regular basis. The findings for supervisors and supervisees appear in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

<u>Professional Publications</u>	Percent Who Read Regularly	
	<u>Managers/ Supervisors</u>	<u>Reporters/Copy Editors</u>
Public opinion poll reports in magazines and newspapers (e.g., Harris, Gallup, Yankelovich)	72%	56%
<u>Editor and Publisher</u>	61%	47%
Critical reviews (e.g., <u>Columbia Journalism Review</u> , <u>Washington Journalism Review</u>)	56%	41%
<u>Quill</u>	36%	24%
<u>ASNE Bulletin</u>	23%	4%
<u>Editor's Exchange</u>	21%	1%
<u>Presstime</u>	17%	3%
<u>ANPA News Research Report</u>	16%	2%
Academic publications (e.g., <u>Journalism Quarterly</u> , <u>Newspaper Research Journal</u>)	8%	6%
<u>APME News</u>	10%	2%

Three-fifths of the journalists monitor the results of polls conducted by national research organizations. Half of the sample reported reading Editor and Publisher, and one-fourth read Quill. Critical reviews of the field, such as Columbia Journalism Review, are read by almost half of the journalists. None of the other publications reaches as much as one-tenth of the overall sample. In particular, very few are exposed to periodicals carrying research information, such as Journalism Quarterly or ANPA News Research Reports.

For all of these professional publications, managers and supervisors read more than do those at lower ranks. Editors are more likely to read polls, critical reviews, Editor and Publisher and Quill, and they constitute

most of the audience for secondary trade press publications. In addition, news people with at least 10 years experience have slightly higher readership for these periodicals; the main exception is Quill, which is more popular with newer journalists.

These findings suggest that journalists are not motivated to seek out research information aside from public opinion poll data. While reading of the trade press is widespread, sources featuring substantive research about the industry and reading audience are not well-read.

What Role for Research?

"Surveys are locked up like crown jewels. They don't want reporters to know."

-- A reporter, 1981

"Surveys shouldn't substitute for judgement."

-- A section editor, 1981

"Surveys should help inform decisions-- scientific research deserves more weight than a conversation with a neighbor."

-- An editor, 1981

"Reporters know best."

-- A reporter, 1981

News people are apprehensive about the research studies that are becoming increasingly widespread in the industry. They have limited exposure to research findings, some skepticism about the validity of the procedures, and some reluctance to utilize the findings in decision-making.

One-third of the journalists reported that they attempt to keep up with current newspaper industry research. Editors and long-term journalists make a greater effort to keep current and would favor spending more money on research. Just one person in five agreed that their newspaper facilitates the dissemination of research findings to staff members (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4

<u>Research Statements*</u>	<u>Percent: Agree (4 or 5)</u>	<u>In-Between (3)</u>	<u>Disagree (1 or 2)</u>	<u>Average</u>
I make an effort to stay abreast of current newspaper industry research.	33%	25%	42%	2.87
In general, my newspaper encourages the dissemination of current research findings among the staff.	19%	25%	56%	2.34**
Findings of current research conducted on the newspaper industry often affect the decisions made in our newsroom.	23%	36%	41%	2.69**
If I were responsible for the budget of my newspaper, I would favor spending more money on research.	41%	30%	29%	3.16
* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)				
**Results differed significantly across locations.				

The restricted dissemination of research information is further illustrated by the widespread lack of awareness of the Newspaper Readership Project. Fewer than one-third of the sample had heard of the project, and just 14% had seen any of the research reports. Again, long-time and management level personnel had greater exposure.

To assess the pattern of diffusion of research findings in the organization, one question asked, "How soon do you find out about newspaper research findings?" The responses appear in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5

	<u>Supervisors/Editors</u>	<u>Reporters/Copy Editors</u>
I obtain research results . . .		
before anyone else	5%	1%
before most people on the staff	28%	7%
about the time everyone else does	39%	42%
after everyone else	7%	8%
almost never	21%	42%

Clearly, supervisors find out about research before reporters and other staffers. More than two-fifths of the reporter group rarely learn about research. These responses indicate that the diffusion of information within the newsroom is limited and follows a hierarchical pattern.

Exposure to local readership surveys is more widespread, particularly among supervisors. About half of the sample had seen or hear about the findings of one or two readership surveys, and a fifth had learned about several studies. When asked in what form readership information was received, the most common mode was discussions with supervisors (45% of editors and 20% of reporters), followed by memos or brief summaries (29% of editors and 19% of reporters), conversations with co-workers (24% of editors and 17% of reporters), and written full-length reports (28% of editors and 9% of reporters). In addition, about one-tenth had heard researchers' oral presentations. Thus, formal channels are used more than informal, and oral communication is more prevalent than written messages. In the personal interviews, a common complaint was that such research information is not made available to the staffs.

When asked to evaluate newspaper industry audience research, news people gave neutral to slightly positive ratings (see Table 5.6). Roughly three-fifths of the respondents rated newspaper research as relatively useful, beneficial and necessary, but only half characterized it as valid. About one person in nine gave unfavorable rating scores.

There were no differences by location or position (reporters versus supervisors). Journalists who reported the greatest exposure to audience research felt more favorably about it, as did those with the greatest exposure to professional publications. This indicates that greater familiarity with research information leads to greater appreciation of it, or vice versa.

Table 5.6

Evaluations of Newspaper Industry Audience Research on Five-Point Scale						
	Percent rating: <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>5</u>					Average
Invalid (1) to Valid (5)	3%	10%	38%	32%	18%	3.54
Useless (1) to Useful (5)	2%	10%	27%	42%	19%	3.66
Worthless (1) to Beneficial (5)	2%	8%	32%	39%	19%	3.64
Unnecessary (1) to Necessary (5)	2%	10%	29%	32%	27%	3.72

The statement in Table 5.4 about a person's own willingness to fund research provides further indication of people's attitudes toward it. Two out of five said they would favor more money for research, while 29% disagreed. Those who gave a more favorable evaluation of research on utility, benefit, validity and necessity were more likely to support greater budget allocations to research (correlation = +.53). There was also an association between exposure to research and support for more spending (correlation = +.35). Supervisors were more likely than subordinates to favor greater expenditures.

Although many journalists agree that research can be valuable, only a fourth agreed that the findings of readership research often affect newsroom decision-making. Most also believed research is much more appropriate for advertising purposes, identification of audience demographics and selecting features than for making editorial decisions about news stories. Four out of five said audience research is appropriate to give advertisers information, three out of four said it could inform decisions about layout and format, and nearly two-thirds said it was an acceptable aid in selecting features. But half said it should not be used to decide newsworthiness of stories and over half thought that using research to guide news judgments would result in important news going uncovered (see Table 5.7).

Table 5.7

Appropriate Uses for Readership Surveys			
<u>Possible Uses</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not sure</u>
To help determine what types of stories are newsworthy	44%	50%	6%
To help decide what features to publish	64%	29%	8%
To help plan changes in format and layout	75%	18%	7%
To help provide information to advertisers about audience	80%	14%	7%
If newspapers were guided by reader-ship surveys in deciding what news to cover, do you think that important news would go uncovered?			
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Possibly</u>	<u>Probably</u> <u>Definitely</u>
	19%	30%	26% 26%

Supervisory and long-time personnel were more likely to feel that research can be used for all four purposes mentioned. There was also a positive relationship between endorsing these uses for research and favorable evaluations of research (correlation = +.22). Despite differential expressions of support for research in interviews at the eight locations, no location differences appeared on these survey questions.

The in-person interviews did provide some insights into why news people view research as they do and what role it currently plays. As in the survey, most journalists reported that research has little impact on newsroom decisions. Just one in seven felt that readership studies affect judgments about the relative priority given to various news topics. For instance, one publisher said, "They have an impact on how we assign reporters, how we play stories." When asked if research should have more influence, a majority agreed, but their support usually carried many qualifications.

Those who supported greater reliance on surveys spoke of using them as a tool or loose guide to know more about their readers so that reader needs could be better served; they did not believe that reader preferences

should exert a controlling influence. One person said, "A lot of us suspect large segments of the community don't read us -- we would like to know more," while another commented that scientific research should help inform decisions and carry more weight than the passing remarks of a neighbor. But others warned, "Surveys shouldn't substitute for judgment," and "Readers don't know what they need -- we do." One segment felt that they really don't need survey information to understand the audience: "We represent the cross-section -- we have the feel," and "Surveys are often redundant with what we already know or intuit."

Interviewees were asked to identify specific problems and pitfalls of relying on readership surveys. The two most frequent criticisms centered on the technical quality of the data and the potential misuse in pandering to reader preferences. Some journalists questioned the representativeness of the survey samples or the ability to elicit meaningful responses from readers. Some typical comments:

"Surveys are unreliable."

"Surveys ask the wrong type of questions."

"People give what they should say and not what they really think."

In addition, many journalists said they do not find survey results to be understandable.

The other substantive pitfall involves the danger of playing to popular tastes and the threat that this poses to journalists fulfilling their professional responsibility. If surveys begin to play a larger role, some said journalistic standards might be undermined, as reflected by these observations:

"We can't let the reader run the newspaper."

"We are professionals, we know what is news."

"They would give readers only what they want and not what they need."

In sum, journalists are ambivalent toward readership surveys. They view the findings with suspicion and concern, but realize that some useful guidance can be gleaned from them.

Before committing more resources and attention to readership survey findings, editors and reporters need to be reassured about the lack of threat of such information to their journalistic autonomy and they need to be convinced about the technical merit of survey data. Once these roadblocks are removed, news people may be more receptive to inputs from survey researchers who measure the reading audience.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF NEWSPAPERS

This section looks at the condition of the industry with an eye towards the future of print journalism. It includes discussions of journalists' images of their newspapers, of their ideas about nonreadership, of movements within the journalistic profession that challenge the status quo, and of the future of journalism.

In general, the responses encountered during the personal interviews and surveys were more positive than negative. But, average responses fail to tell the entire story. In each section, a closer look at the responses reveals potential problems that should give rise to management concern. While the specific nature of the problems differs, the binding thread is the concern of a large number of journalists that the profession is presently out of step with readers and is making little effort to regain the march.

What Image Do Journalists Hold?

"Newspapers are one of the major institutions that are natural sources of resentment. We are viewed as outsiders in the community. Groups accentuate that. We need to get back to the community, be part of it."

-- A journalist, 1981

News people hold a moderately positive image of their newspaper but are tentative about its future and public image.

News people generally believe their newspaper has a good image and is trying to make the changes required to expand readership. Respondents disagreed with the statement that the image of their newspaper is declining but are less convinced as to whether or not they will continue to lose readership. Those who do feel that their newspaper's image is declining tend to be reporters more so than editors. Respondents also indicated that they feel the newspaper is making progressive changes in content and format but are less assured that these changes will regain lost readers. Again, editors are more optimistic than reporters. Replies are summarized in Table 6.1.

While the average responses indicate a guarded optimism, a large number offer a more pessimistic perspective. Over a fourth of those responding feel their newspaper's image is actually declining and that it is not making the corrections needed to stop the backsliding. An alarmingly large group, 40% of those responding, agreed that readers will increasingly turn to other media that will better serve their needs. More reporters feel this pessimism than editors.

Table 6.1

Image/Future Statements*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
The image of our paper is declining.	27%	24%	48%	2.67
We are making headway in regaining readers' interest and confidence.	39%	32%	28%	3.10
It is likely that we will lose readers, relative to our population growth, in the next five years.	28%	23%	39%	2.95**
I feel readers in the future will more and more turn to other media that better meet their needs.	40%	29%	32%	3.11**
I feel this newspaper has been making progressive changes in content and format.	56%	19%	29%	3.42**
I am optimistic about the future of print journalism in our community.	48%	24%	27%	3.32**

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Results differed significantly across locations.

While the concern over image is plainly there, the causes behind it are less clear. "Newspapers are seen as arrogant," was the reasoning offered by one editor. "People are sick to death with reporters as defenders of their freedom," commented another. Those journalists who feel that newspapers and journalists are out-of-touch with their communities believe that the communities sense the separation.

The optimists tend to cite the newspaper's traditional role of providing in-depth coverage as a means of attracting and holding readers. The faith that newspapers have a guaranteed role in their communities was expressed by one

editor: "(People) trust newspaper news more than TV news because they can get more details (from the newspaper) which help them determine how good the story is. We have no reason to slant a story." The less optimistic disagreed. "The backlash of Watergate has served to cause distrust of newspapers and reduce their influence on public opinion." Others pointed to newspaper scandals as tarnishing their image: "Coverage of (newspaper scandals) has caused people to distrust newspapers."

Journalists may be unnecessarily pessimistic about the public's view of them. This is evident by comparing the journalists' own image ratings with those the public gives its local newspapers.¹ Journalists see their newspapers' image as being stronger in trustworthiness, accuracy, lack of bias, competence, and lack of sensationalism than do readers. Readers, on the other hand, see their newspapers as acting as a community watchdog, carrying the latest news, personalizing the news, being courageous and lively, and caring about the reader to a greater extent than does the average journalist. While readers tend to exalt journalists and their role in the community, they do not necessarily attribute to them the trustworthiness and fairness that many journalists see as the sanctity of the profession.

These discrepant images are likely a result of both groups simply not understanding each other. The lack of understanding may be the fault and should be the worry of the journalist. "(The newspaper industry) doesn't do a good job of educating the reader about the profession and how to communicate with it. (This is) due to our hands-off policy toward our own industry," commented an editor. Faced with a lack of reliable information, the public turns to the image presented via the entertainment media or to the stories about the reporting scandals.

¹These conclusions are based on results from readership research in over 40 newspaper markets, including 21 of the largest SMSA's in the country.

If journalists are to continue relying on the trustworthiness, accuracy and objectivity of their product to attract readers, they would be well served to realize that that image is less stable than they currently believe. On the other hand, if they are going to entice readers with format and content changes, they should know that readers already think of the paper as less dull, less impersonal and more enterprising than journalists do.

Are Newspapers Losing Readers?

"TV -- it's killing us."

-- A reporter, 1981

That quote captures the problem from most journalists' perspective. While some respondents cited more complex causation for a decline in readership, such as life style changes, leisure-time activities, or reading habits and abilities, most thought TV was at the root of the evils. When interviewees were asked if they felt TV had caused the decline in readership of newspapers, 85% agreed. Most thought it was television's visual attraction that drew away their readers. They said the visual element makes television easier, more satisfying, and more believable (but not more credible) than newspapers. Television gives people short, fast-paced news and is in contrast with the newspaper's detailed, professional, objective treatment of a story, they said.

This contrast between the television and newspaper format is considered important by journalists, partially because of their negative image of the average reader. "People may not want more than the 30-second voice-over they get on television," was a typical comment. Readers, according to the journalists interviewed, are reading less, largely because reading ability is on the downswing. Those that aren't "functionally illiterate" are thought not to have the time to read because of outside time demands, because of their laziness, or because today's life style seduces the reader away from the newspaper. The notion is therefore one of a changing reader who is enticed away from the newspaper, not who turns away because the paper fails to meet his or her needs.

A minority of respondents were not in agreement and chose to look inside the newspaper industry for the causes of readership decline. "TV is mostly a scapegoat for the editors," indicated a reporter. The opinions of this group are in line with a respondent who commented, "The newspaper has gotten fatter, more complete, but may be too wordy and more intimidating." Some said their newspaper is too dull. One remarked that, "The paper is a bland beast." Another indicated that print journalists have fallen behind broadcasters and need to catch up: "... Partly, we've abdicated immediacy to TV and radio. We haven't been aggressive enough in telling people what news means to them, covering things radio and television cannot." There was even optimism, as expressed by one editor, "TV has changed the way we have to cover things. It has cut down on newspaper readers, but it also is our best way of creating interest -- the reader's interest is whetted by TV."

Even the self-examiners and the optimists were of a traditional school of thought that treats television as entertainment and newspapers as the only real journalism. While not contained in any single quotation or response to a survey item, the general sentiment expressed overall was that print journalism does something that the reader needs, but that because of the attractiveness of television, does not want in sufficient quantity. Neither the journalists who blamed TV news nor those who blamed the newspaper industry spoke of the need to find out what the reader wants. Rather, they stressed reader needs that are defined by the professional journalists and simply proposed to catch up to television by offering more attractive layouts and doing a better job of "telling the people what news means to them."

Do VDTs Please?

"I luv'em...when they work."

-- A reporter, 1981

"(VDTs) limit communication between everyone in the newsroom. Stories don't get around so fast."

-- A reporter, 1981

Good computer systems make the news business more fun for all except copy editors.

When asked about the use of video display terminals in the newsroom, the typical response was positive: "They are faster, easier and more convenient." Survey results, shown in Table 6.2, indicate more divided opinion. While a majority feel comfortable with the new technology and feel that VDTs have made their job more pleasant, over a third are dissatisfied with the way the new technology is being used in their newsroom.

Table 6.2

Statement*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
I am satisfied with the way electronic news processing technology is used at this newspaper.	46%	18%	35%	3.13 **
The training I received in how to use the new technology was adequate.	45%	20%	35%	3.09 **
I am comfortable with my ability to operate the new technology that my job requires.	71%	15%	14%	3.80 **
The presence of new technology has significantly reduced the amount of discussion among reporters and editors.	22%	18%	60%	2.38 **
Overall, the introduction of new technology has made my job more pleasant.	55%	22%	23%	3.48 **
* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). **Results differed significantly across locations.				

Reactions differed significantly across locations. In one newsroom, satisfaction averaged a high of 4.52 on the 5-point scale; at another, it was a low of 2.43. Unhappiness with the local system appears primarily related to availability of and access to the terminals and secondarily, to the system's reliability. Commenting on accessibility, one reporter offered, "We're still typing on IBM typewriters. The system is inadequate." Another

summarized the staff's frustration with, "I don't have access to the equipment. Huge fights break out over whether or not the system will work and if we can get access to a VDT." Others centered on the system's frequent breakdowns as a source of dissatisfaction. "They have problems... like disappearing." Satisfaction, on the other hand, seems related to the absence of these problems.

Reactions to VDTs also differed by age and position. Older journalists are less satisfied and comfortable with the new technology than are younger staffers. Supervisors are more confident about their ability to operate the system than are subordinates. Surprisingly, despite the fact that most respondents feel copy editors are the main beneficiaries of the new systems, it is the copy editors who are least satisfied.

The training one receives on how to operate the system is related to overall satisfaction. In general, respondents were moderately satisfied with the training they received. Again, the differences across locations are significant, with satisfaction ratings ranging from moderately dissatisfied (average = 2.46) to highly satisfied (average = 4.00). Not surprisingly, there is a consistent ordering of locations on questions dealing with overall satisfaction and adequacy of training programs. Across all locations, satisfaction with the overall system and satisfaction with the training program are highly correlated ($r = +.41$), as are confidence in one's ability to operate the technology and training ($r = +.54$).

A frequently heard complaint, in addition to the problems of access and reliability, was that the new technology reduced the amount of face-to-face discussion between editors and reporters. For example, one respondent said, "News editors can look at stories easier so they can preview them easier. That should be useful. But, it also locks them to the VDT, so they have less contact with the staff." Another staffer indicated the decreased communication slows the work. The survey data do not entirely support these claims, as

60% of the respondents disagreed that the technology limited discussion. However, 22% did indicate lesser discussion among reporters and editors. Supervisors disagreed more strongly than nonsupervisors, possibly because a supervisor has greater contact with a larger number of subordinates while a reporter has more restricted contact with those in management positions. There were also significant differences across locations and age groups, a finding that may reflect the effect of different management styles and a general bias against the technology by older respondents.

Finally, journalists were asked if the new technology had made their jobs more pleasant. The responses were generally positive, with 55% agreeing, but again showed significant differences from one newspaper to another (responses ranged from an average of 4.61 to 2.94). In general, the higher ratings were at locations with the positive attributes discussed above, while the lower evaluations were in newsrooms with problems with equipment access and reliability. No significant differences were indicated between supervisors and nonsupervisors considered as groups, but differences were present between specific job categories. Most notably, copy editors stood alone in their disagreement that the new technology made their jobs more pleasant (an average of 2.86 as compared with 3.83, 3.31, 3.75 and 3.43 for reporters, columnists, supervisory editors and senior management staff, respectively).

Although the dissatisfaction of the copy editors is initially surprising, it is less so upon examination of the reported likes and dislikes common to users of VDTs. As Table 6.3 indicates, by far the most commonly expressed advantage of the electronic news processing equipment is a combination of speed, ease, and convenience and the most common disadvantages are complaints of eye strain, tension, headaches, and the fear of breakdowns. The copy editors, by nature of their jobs, feel least benefitted and most taxed by the technology. With the exception of large scale copy changes,

it is probably not significantly easier for them to change a word or letter with a cursor on a screen than with a blue pencil on paper. The relative advantage of the system is likely a function of individual preference and ability to manipulate the machine's commands. Further, the copy editor's job requires detailed work and long hours at the VDT which exacerbates such problems as eye strain and headaches. Conversely, other staffers and supervisors often spend major portions of their daily routine away from the VDT, minimizing the negative aspects of the equipment.

Table 6.3

<u>Common likes of VDT's</u>	<u>Common dislikes of VDT's</u>
More convenient	Breakdowns
Easier to write	Loss of material
Easier to edit	Eye strain
Easier access to stories, notes	Health worries
Easier retrieval of material	Headaches
Faster	Tension
Cleaner copy	Shortage of terminals
Like to write on it	Limits communication
Better writing	Vibrations
Lighter writing	Interactive command problems
	Hard to find stories, notes
	Newsroom adapts to machines
	Difficult to train reporters on writing style
	Reporter/editor contributions not identifiable
	More emphasis on mechanics than writing
	No effect on deadline pressure
	Miss sound of typewriters
	Frightened by it
	More tempting to edit stories

The discrepancy between the opinions of copy editors and other newsroom personnel relative to the technology is highlighted by a series of questions probing the benefits of the electronic processing of news. The results, summarized in Table 6.4, show widespread agreement that the technology has benefitted the copy editors. Copy editors, however, were less enthusiastic. While the average response for all surveyed was 4.03, the average for copy

editors was a much lower 3.62. They also were much less likely to agree that the new technology benefits "me" (average = 3.31) than were respondents in general (average = 3.70). Managers should be made aware that, while there is considerable evidence that many copy editors are neither satisfied with nor benefitted by the new technology, few people in the newsroom are aware of their viewpoints.

Table 6.4

Statement*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
In my opinion, the introduction of electronic news processing technology has proven very beneficial for...				
...the newspaper overall	81%	12%	6%	4.22**
...copy editors	75%	13%	12%	4.02**
...supervising editors	71%	18%	11%	3.98**
...the production staff	70%	16%	14%	3.94**
...the reporters	65%	22%	13%	3.79**
...me	64%	16%	20%	3.70**
...the readers	45%	31%	24%	3.35**

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Results differed significantly across locations.

With respect to the remaining job types, 71% of the journalists agreed that the new technology had benefitted supervisors. Differences again appear across location and show a linear relationship with age (younger respondents being more likely to agree than older respondents). Similarly, 65% see the new technology as benefitting reporters and 70% see it benefitting production staff.

One troublesome finding is the perceived failure of newspapers to translate their staff-related benefits of new technology to readers. While res-

pondents agreed strongly that the technology benefits the newspaper overall, they were less likely to agree that it also benefitted readers. Clearly, such advancements as ease, speed, and convenience are not necessarily reader-related. However, it would seem that the reader would benefit if the technology positively affected news-gathering or decision-making within the newsroom. As seen in the summary of comments from personal interviews (Table 6.5), the potential for reader benefits is clearly present. For example, more timely reporting, increased stories, better writing, and easier adaptation of stories to breaking events or local interests could be directly translated into better satisfaction of readers' wants and needs. On the other hand, the majority of the effects on decision-making are negative and indicate that the newspapers may not have adapted to the new technology successfully or in a manner that best uses the technology to improve the final product.

Table 6.5

<u>Effects on news-gathering</u>	<u>Effects on decision-making</u>
More timely reporting	Editors more involved because preview easier
More stories covered	Less gatekeeping by individuals
Stories easier to adapt/change	Moved deadline up 1 1/2 hours
Less gatekeeping because more people see story	Less staff contact
Greater control over content/volume	Cannot get hard copy when needed
Stories easy to preview/edit	Creates staff conflicts
Portable machines permit easier access to distant stories	
Can write up to deadline	
Slowed processing of story	
Easier to process wire copy	

What Impact from "New Journalism"?

"In features, we have lots of people who want to be Tom Wolfe or Gay Talese. This can be a problem if it brings elaborate descriptions of what could have happened and not what actually happened."

-- An editor, 1981

"News is a three piece suit. Features is an Hawaiian shirt. There's room for shirts in this business."

-- A reporter, 1981

A trend towards emphasizing style and technique over the traditional 5 W's worries editors. A difference of perspective exists in many newsrooms concerning the advantages and the propriety of new journalism. According to older, traditional viewpoints, new journalism is a threat to the credibility and professionalism of journalism. Many younger journalists themselves see it as the new wave, capturing the reader's attention and interest and telling a more complete story. Some, therefore, see it as having the potential to destroy the business; others look to it as a means of saving journalism.

The new journalism movement, as referenced by senior editors, actually encompasses two different but related movements. One is the trend illustrated by Wolfe, Talese, Capote, and others who emphasize style, technique, detail, subjectivity, and unconventionality over traditional canons of journalistic writing. This part of the new journalism movement sees reporting as an art form rather than a craft. The second element in the senior editors' conception of new journalism follows from the Woodward and Bernstein tradition of investigating the important, anti-establishment story, and reporting it in a relatively traditional format.

The fear of editors seems not of these movements in themselves, but instead centers on an idea that if they are coupled with youthful impatience, with a departure from traditional values of accuracy and objectivity, and an unwillingness to adequately research the material, the result may be speculation, bias, and even fabrication of stories. Said one editor, "We've got to train (younger journalists) to be reporters, to pick up the rock and look under it." Commented another, "(Younger reporters) have a grandiose idea of what it is to be a journalist. They want to be a star and are not concerned or prepared for boring county commission meetings. Investigative reporting

is also boring and tedious... They see themselves as writing the big story, not digging for it."

The worry, then, is the threat to accuracy. "Accuracy is still the very basic thing. That's why it is better to have reporters than writers," cautioned a senior editor. Not surprisingly, just about everyone agreed. As noted at the outset of this report, when respondents were asked to rank order six qualities of a news story, including accuracy, impartiality, depth, investigative enterprise, sophistication of treatment and literary style, accuracy and impartiality were top ranked. They were listed as most or second most important by 96% and 62% (respectively) of the survey respondents. The qualities associated with new journalism, such as literary style and sophistication of treatment, were ranked as highly important by less than 5% of those responding.

Although accuracy was highly regarded by most respondents, the fears of editors were supported by some significant differences relative to rankings of story qualities by journalists of different ages and different levels of experience. For example, less experienced journalists were more likely to rank the depth of a story as important than were more experienced staffers. Impartiality was more valued by older respondents than by younger ones. And, as feared by editors, while the younger reporters favored depth over impartiality, they were also less likely to value investigative enterprise than were the seasoned, older journalists.

For many, the hope of new journalism rests in a perceived need to package news into a more readable and interesting format. Supporters see features as a means of reaching that end. The subjective element should not be feared, according to some news people, because the reader is sophisticated enough to separate hard fact from a reporter's speculation and ideas. The added emphasis on the subjective elements presents a more complete and interesting story to

the reader, comparable to the visual element provided by television news coverage. As to threats of inaccuracy and fabrication, many editors and reporters believe the profession will weed out those who might stray from journalistic values. Said one editor, "The best will remain; the others will go."

A few respondents see new journalism as already dying, a trend supported by the survey data. While the data reveal a declining commitment to traditional journalism values with age, the relationship is somewhat curved, with the middle aged and mid-career journalists generally most liking new journalism. The very young and the senior staffers hold closer to traditional values. This indicates the wave of "Hawaiian shirt" journalism may be passing. On the other hand, the people most likely to hold these nontraditional ideas may soon be moving into management positions, and may be in a position to influence the younger reporters toward feature writing. Whether either condition is good for journalism is dependent on how one views the trend, i.e., whether "three piece suits" or "Hawaiian shirts" are considered the best image to offer the reader.

One final comment concerning new journalism should be made. There is a feeling among some reporters and editors that group ownership has changed journalists by making them corporate- rather than community-oriented. This is in line with the concern expressed by some editors and reporters alike about people becoming too opportunistic and too concerned with organizational politics. One said, "There are a lot of idiotic people in the newspaper business currently. New people are too aggressive, upwardly mobile -- too career oriented and the corporation encourages this." The fear connected with these traits is that upward mobility within a group newspaper generally means a change of location, and aggressiveness means the more changes, the better.

The end result can be that reporters and editors will have less and less contact with their communities and be more and more encouraged to conform to corporate norms and values. Many of the problems thus far discussed in this report--of not being part of a community, of not understanding reader needs, of not wanting to dig for a story--may be more of a threat to corporate-owned newspapers than to independently owned presses. The corporate philosophy was present in many responses to the interview question concerning who a reporter had in mind when he or she sat down to write a story. While "the reader" was in the forefront, one's "peers," "other journalists," one's "podmates" or one's supervisors were not far behind.

What Responsibility for Journalism Education?

"About the only advantage a J-School graduate has over anyone else is that they often know how to use a VDT."

-- An editor, 1981

"Journalism faculty just do not know what is happening in this industry any more."

-- An editor, 1981

"I was taught to be isolated from everyone in journalism school."

-- A reporter, 1981

"If you want to do something about this (insularity), you are going to have to start with the educators, they're responsible."

-- A publisher, 1982

"God, I resent the fact that they did not prepare me to do my job."

-- A reporter, 1982

"My biggest concern is what kind of journalist we are producing today...Entry level people are the most abysmal lot I've ever seen."

-- A managing editor, 1981

Many journalists look back on their formal education with a less-than-positive attitude about those experiences.

A majority of the people interviewed in this study claimed that most of what they had learned about the news business came from on-the-job training received after they left school. Of those who had graduated from journalism schools, 24% thought their education was very or somewhat worthless, while slightly more than half thought it had value; the rest were neither laudatory nor critical. The distribution of survey replies and the interview comments suggest that many journalism school graduates have some reservations about their educational experiences. While this project included very few questions to probe the sources of discontent with the educational experiences of working journalists, some sources of discontent surfaced in the face-to-face interviews.

One is that journalism education is not preparing young, would-be journalists for an increasingly quantitative, numbers-oriented and scientific world. Some journalists told us they were unprepared to understand research data, including readership research. Others mentioned the absence of any quantitative orientation in their education. Some even admitted initially entering journalism school, at least in part, because they had low aptitude or interest in math and knew this was one place they could avoid encountering a lot of numbers.

When these attitudes were relayed to working editors and to journalism educators, some responded with skepticism, others with anger and others with complete disbelief that journalists would say such things. Some editors and educators disagree with the notion that the world in which we live is a quantitative one or profess not to understand what a quantitative world might be. Others reject the notion that journalists have to deal with a world that has become more complex, more scientific and more data-based. One editor suggested that the social sciences had contributed nothing to our understanding of human

behavior and that newspaper people would be better off just ignoring anything that was based upon either numbers or some quasi-scientific attempt to understand more about the public they intended to serve. Earlier in this report, we discussed in detail the suspiciousness of many journalists about research. Some reporters and editors added that such suspicions were first learned in college classes.

Many people who distrust research believe that you cannot replace "art" with "science." They claim that they were taught that journalists are the best judges of what the public ought be given and that it is their professional responsibility to make such decisions. This is consistent with the earlier noted preference of many to give the public "what they ought to know" and with such comments as, "Reporters know best."

However, there is also a significant group of journalists who say that they are unprepared to use or evaluate quantitative information. We were told that journalists need more training to better understand how to use research to tailor their products to the needs, wants and desires of the reading and non-reading public. They also need to know how to assess research used by others. For example, reporters on political beats must contend with politicians' increased use of sophisticated polling techniques and the use of numerical data by candidates. For many journalists, research is a mystery and they feel at the mercy of research firms and managers who control such information. Consequently, they may be skeptical of it.

A related deficiency in journalism education, according to some, is preparation in such quantitative sciences as business and economics. Some journalists expressed discomfort in writing about business without a basic understanding of the principles of economics. Reporters assigned to cover finance, economics, government, and politics were the most likely to criticize the lack of preparation they received in journalism schools. Editors

also mentioned the unavailability of qualified people to write in some of these areas.

Colleges of Business long ago recognized the need to train would-be managers in the quantitative sciences and decision-making. Journalism schools have been slow to recognize such a need, partially because the faculty are not themselves trained in such methods. Many young journalists aspire to advance to management positions as soon as possible but lack the training to do many of the tasks required of media managers. There are few first-rate newspaper management programs in existence in this country. Several people interviewed in this study were seeking graduate degrees in management at their local universities. Some were resentful that they could not get management training specifically developed for their profession. Feedback since the preliminary report was released has bolstered our initial conclusion that many journalists want more training in media management yet have no idea where they might obtain such a program.

There are several policy implications apparent from our interview data. First, there is a general feeling among journalists that college professors are very isolated from what is happening in the profession. We often heard it said that college professors are people who could not make it in the profession and now exist in a vacuum in which their understanding of newspapers decreases year by year. Journalists and those in management positions feel strongly that the deficiencies in journalism education will only be solved when professors get more in touch with the industry.

Second, a clear majority (65%) of journalists want their newspapers to be more active in mid-career training opportunities. When such opportunities present themselves, journalists express appreciation. They also have very definitive ideas about what they want additional training programs to deal

with. The questionnaire data yielded the following most often mentioned topics for additional training (listed in order of most often mentioned):

1. Training and information about electronic media
2. Management training
3. Research, computers, statistics
4. Graphics and layout
5. Business and economics
6. Writing and editing improvement

Third, the data reinforce the concern, discussed throughout this report, with the competing electronic media and a desire to learn more about how they function. Moreover, these results provide support for the conclusions drawn in this section about a desire for more attention to research, management, business and economics as well as some nuts and bolts of the business. Certainly the professional associations and local management must be aware that there are general concerns over what journalists learned in their educational experiences and a desire for specific training opportunities while they are on the job. The question is not whether journalists desire more training nor what it is they want to know. The question is who will be responsible for journalism education.

WHOSE FIRST AMENDMENT IS IT: SOME COMPETING VIEWS

"Many of us have become convinced that the greatest danger to a free press is not Supreme Court rulings that close courtroom doors, not courts that send reporters to jail for not revealing the source of their confidential information, not legislatures that pass overly broad privacy laws, and not administrative agencies that close their records. Rather we believe it is the lack of public concern about such rulings and laws that present the greatest danger to the flow of information and ideas upon which a free society depends."

--Jean H. Otto,
First Amendment Congress, 1980

"People are very sophisticated in their knowledge and evaluation of the media."

--Michael Burgoon,
First Amendment Congress, 1980

"People do not have any ideas what is news. We are the professionals and know what is good for them."

--A working journalist, 1981

In journalists' bid to become independent of political pressure and civic bias, they may be becoming elitists, risking alienation of the public they are supposed to serve.

In reviewing the totality of the survey and interview results, we have come to the conclusion that a fair number of journalists feel aloof from the public and have little true regard for it. These attitudes manifested themselves in such findings as:

- cynicism about the public's intelligence;
- isolation from community life and feedback;
- underestimation of the public's demand for news;
- overestimation of the public's desire for titillation;
- rejection of public input into newspapers;
- arrogance about the news person's role as a gatekeeper;

--acknowledgement of feelings of being out of touch and holding different values;

--rejection of research as a means of increasing public feedback.

In some newsrooms, the public-be-damned attitude seemed to reach siege mentality. Some news people reveled in their rejection of public feedback or any encroachment on their independence, even by supervisors.

Thus, a significant issue raised by this study is how the profession is to fulfill its role as seeker of truth and facilitator of the free flow of ideas without losing touch with the public it is supposed to serve. The danger apparent in news people who communicate largely with each other, reject public scrutiny and belittle the people they're supposed to serve is one of eroding support for their First Amendment privileges.

This study shows Jean Otto is only partially correct in her assertion that the lack of public concern about the free flow of information and ideas is the greatest danger to a free press. An even greater danger lies in many journalists' feelings that the greatest threat to their freedom is interference from the public they are supposed to serve. This report has shown many journalists to be out of touch with the communities they serve. And for many, this is a state of affairs they would prefer to maintain.

While professional newspaper organizations have made admirable attempts to educate the people on what the First Amendment means, they have failed to educate their staffs to believe that the First Amendment belongs to the people and not to them.

While much of the data highlighted indicators of insularity and elitism among reporters, responsibility also must be shared with management. Although managers have a better understanding of the newspaper's mission, some show as much disdain for the public as do staff members. What also becomes apparent is that

so many editors have become accountants, labor negotiators and crisis managers that their day has ended before they can deal with news issues.

When discussing the issues raised about the First Amendment views of working journalists with a group of people variously concerned with the newspaper industry, a senior researcher commented that prior research on other occupational groups had uncovered similar patterns regarding superior-subordinate relationships, job satisfaction and professional attitudes. It was the sort of comment meant to suggest that this was really not unexpected and that it was merely surprising to some because such research had not been conducted on journalists before. An editor quickly and forcefully gave an opposing view:

"Nonsense. No auto worker ever claimed First Amendment protection for the right not to do his job as he should."

So the question of whose First Amendment it is must be addressed by policy makers concerned with the media. Many news people are convinced it is their own, and perhaps believing it makes it true. The newsroom can be a bastion for the arrogant, the insular and the indifferent.

It can be, and in many cases is, a vehicle for protecting the First Amendment rights of the people. As Dan Rather of CBS said at the First Amendment Congress in 1980, reporters have wrongly made the First Amendment issues seem like a journalistic fight. But he quoted his colleague Eric Sevareid as remarking, "There is no such thing as saying, 'My end of the boat is sinking'."

While we aren't sure anything is sinking, we are convinced that much could be gained by accepting the fact that the people have more of a vested interest in keeping a free press afloat than many working journalists concede.

APPENDIX A

TECHNICAL NOTE

Sample and Sample Design

A total of 489 newsroom people completed the written questionnaire while 187 people were interviewed in a face-to-face setting. All data were collected from September to December, 1981, at the eight newsroom locations by members of the Michigan State University research team. All newsroom personnel in each of the locations were encouraged to fill out the written questionnaires. Prior to each site visit, the research team provided the local editor with a list of people to be scheduled for face-to-face interviews. A list of alternates was also provided in case conflicting work schedules prevented a person from being interviewed.

Approximately half of the face-to-face interviewees were selected because of the position they held in the newsroom. Executive, managing and section editors were always included in the sample, while the remaining interviewees were drawn randomly from employee lists provided by the editors. Respondents were interviewed singly, in pairs or in groups of three by one or more members of the research team.

Description of Sample

The 489 people who completed the questionnaire represented a broad cross-section of demographic characteristics and experiences in the industry. Following is a summary of the distributions of demographic and job-related characteristics of the respondents.

Table 6.1

Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents					
Characteristic	Category	Percent	Characteristic	Category	Percent
Gender	Male	67%	Present Job Title	Reporter	31%
	Female	33%		Copy Editor	16%
Age	Less than 25 years	8%		Columnist/Staff Writer	13%
	25-34	41%		Publisher/Executive Editor/	
	35-44	21%		Managing Editor	6%
	45-54	18%		Supervising Editor (Section, Ass't.)	21%
	55 and over	12%		Other	13%
Education	High school or less	4%	Years in Newspaper Industry	Under 3 years	9%
	Some college	18%		3-5 years	14%
	B.A./B.S.	64%		6-10 years	25%
	M.A./M.S.	14%		11-20 years	26%
	Ph.D.	1%		Over 20 years	26%
Type of College Degree	Journalism: Reporting/News/Editorial	49%	Years in Present Job	Under 3 years	49%
	Mass communication	3%		3-5 years	19%
	Other	4%		6-10 years	14%
	Nonjournalism: English	19%		11-20 years	11%
	Liberal arts/ Humanities	10%		Over 20 years	7%
	Social Sciences	4%	Promoted in Last Two Years	No	64%
	Business	2%		Yes, once	25%
	Other	9%		Yes, more than once	11%
Would Like Additional Training	Yes	65%	Merit Raise in Last Two Years	No	46%
	No	35%		Yes, once	17%
				Yes, more than once	37%

Description of Sample Locations

The eight locations were selected for inclusion in this study on the basis of the following criteria:

- 1) geographic (regional) balance
- 2) urban/non-urban locale
- 3) publication cycle
- 4) circulation
- 5) size of market (in terms of households or population)
- 6) degree of competition from other newspapers and market dominance
- 7) degree of competition from other media

- 8) presence or absence of a guild
- 9) presence or absence of a readership committee or ombudsman
- 10) size of newspaper staff
- 11) ownership arrangement (group or independent) and history
- 12) presence or absence of VDT system

The eight newsrooms were chosen to achieve a mix of characteristics across these several criteria. That variety was achieved is evident from the brief descriptions of each location, including the pilot test site, that follow.

New London Day: Located in Connecticut, this nonunionized evening newspaper has an independent trust arrangement. It has approximately 60 employees in the newsroom and serves a community of around 59,000 households in its primary market area. It is the dominant newspaper with about 69% market penetration but faces competition from nearby dailies and weeklies as well as the New York metropolitan papers. Its VDT system has been in place for about six years for editors, but only 2 months for reporters.

Wilmington Morning News & Evening Journal: These two papers in Delaware provide the other northeastern newsroom. The papers have been part of the Gannett Group since 1978 and were privately owned previously. They have a single, nonunionized newsroom of 164 employees. The papers have a combined circulation in their market, which includes the entire state, of about 130,000. Market penetration in their home county is roughly 75%. The evening paper is dominant. There is limited competition from other daily papers but some from weekly newspapers. Cable TV is available but there are no local TV stations.

Cleveland Plain Dealer: This midwestern morning newspaper has a weekday circulation in excess of 400,000. Its city zone penetration at the time of the study was around 52%. It has been owned by Newhouse for 14 years. Its guild newsroom has 225 employees. Primary local competition came from the Cleveland Press (before its demise), with a large number of other suburban dailies and weeklies also circulating in its market. Several local TV channels are available and cable has just become available.

Wichita Eagle-Beacon: Now one newspaper, this morning publication has a total statewide circulation in Kansas of around 125,000. It dominates its market with 70% weekday penetration of its city zone, which has over 150,000 households. The guild newsroom has 140 employees. At the time of the study, only an editing system was in place, with VDTs anticipated in the newsroom in the spring. Cable TV, local TV stations and radio all provide competition from electronic media. The paper is owned by Knight-Ridder.

Lansing State Journal: This pilot location serving the state capital of Michigan is the third midwestern location. The paper publishes in the evening, with a weekday circulation of around 75,000. It dominates its market, with some competition coming from the Detroit metropolitan papers, local television and radio, and cable. The nonunionized newsroom has 57

employees and had had VDTs in place only three years at the time of the study. The newspaper has been a part of the Gannett Group since 1971 and was previously owned by another group.

The Independent and Daily Mail: These two newspapers are published in Anderson, South Carolina, which is a community of 119,000 people. The morning paper has a circulation of 41,000; the afternoon paper is the smallest in the study, with a circulation of 7000. Together, the two newspapers completely penetrate their market. The nonunionized news staffs total 54 employees. There is a readership committee and VDTs have been in place for four years. The newspapers are owned by Harte-Hanks. Many weeklies circulation in the market and there are two nearby TV stations but none locally.

Tampa Tribune: This morning paper in the "new South" has been owned by Media General for 15 years and was previously family owned. It has a daily circulation of 205,000 and dominates its market with home county penetration of 51%. Its primary competition comes from its sister paper, the Tampa Times. Several other metropolitan and suburban papers also circulate in the area, which is well-served by 5 local and 2 educational TV stations but no cable. VDTs have been in place over 5 years. The nonunionized newsroom has over 200 employees.

San Diego Union: This western paper, owned by Copley, is a morning publication with 216,000 weekday circulation in a primary market of 1.8 million people. It is the dominant newspaper, with primary market penetration of around 37%. Its sister newspaper, The Tribune, also circulates in the area, as do some other metropolitan and many suburban papers. The guild newsroom has roughly 200 employees. VDTs have been installed for 4 years and the newspaper has an ombudsman.

Wenatchee World: This evening newspaper in the mountains of Washington serves a community of 30,000 people. Its circulation is 38,000 newspapers and its market penetration in its city zone is 87%. Its nonunionized newsroom has around 25 employees. The paper is independently owned and has a VDT system. Competition from other media is limited.

Data Analysis Techniques

Throughout this report, data typically appear in the form of percentages or means. Percentages are usually based on the total number of people who were asked a particular question. For example, the statement, "9% of survey respondents are newcomers to the industry" describes the total number of newcomers as a percent of the total population, or 100%. Sometimes percentages will be reported within subgroups, as in "65% of supervising editors see their jobs as routine," in which case the base is only that subgroup of respondents. (Because fractions have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number, some totals may be slightly below or above 100%.)

While percentages are useful, they often are difficult to interpret, especially when trying to compare several questions or several groups. A more useful statistic is the mean, which is the average or "central" response (computed by adding up all the different responses and dividing by the total number of responses.) The use of means permits more precise and powerful comparisons when comparing questions or groups.

One of the most important benefits of the data analyses reported here is that relationships between responses and groups are examined, rather than looking at replies in isolation. To uncover meaningful relationships three general analytic techniques have been used. These will be described briefly here to aid the user of this report in making his or her own interpretations.

The first technique is tests of differences among groups. Means or percentages for one group may appear to be different from those of another group, but often those differences are merely chance fluctuations. However, statistical techniques are available to determine when differences truly exist between two or more numbers. Where statistically significant differences have been found across locations (i.e., the differences are not due to chance), these have been noted in the tables with asterisks (*). Other nonchance differences are noted in the text.

When differences in means are reported, tests of significance used were the t-test for comparisons between two groups and analyses of variance for comparisons among three or more groups. Where significant differences have been reported using percentage data, chi square tests were computed. In all tests of difference, a probability level of .05 was used, indicating that such differences are so large as to only occur 5 out of 100 times by chance alone.

The second technique is correlation, which looks at the association between two variables. A positive relationship means that as one variable increases,

so does the second. For example, the statement that "readership of professional publications is positively associated with support for research" means that as the number of publications read increases, attitudes toward research become increasingly favorable also. A negative (or inverse) relationship means that as one variable increases the other one decreases. For example, there is a negative correlation between age and insularity: As age increases, insularity declines. The method used for computing correlations was the Pearson product-moment correlation. The probability level was again .05.

The third statistical method is stepwise multiple regression. In simple terms, this looks for that combination of variables that has the strongest relationship with a criterion variable. The criterion variable, for example, may be "job satisfaction." Among other possible variables -- age, length of time in industry, position, attitudes toward supervisors, etc. -- those which ought to have the strongest correlations with the criterion variable are identified as "predictors." The goal, in other words, is to identify which of those variables best predict the behavior or the criterion variable. For example, it might be found that access to research is a good predictor of job satisfaction. The method begins by identifying the best predictor and continues on through the second best, third best, and so on, always adding that variable which provides the most new information. The analysis stops when adding new variables does nothing to improve the ability to make accurate predictions. The term "variance accounted for" indicates how successful the combinations of predictors are in predicting the criterion variable. If the variance accounted for were 100% (highly improbable), it would mean that one could perfectly predict an outcome just by knowing the information about the predictor variables. For example, by knowing the age and sex of a person, it might be possible to accurately predict his or her job satisfaction. Multiple

regression analysis is useful because it identifies the subset of factors that truly make a difference in the behavior of interest and rank orders those factors in terms of importance.

In conducting multiple regression analyses in this project, the following criteria were used:

The overall F due to regression had to be significant ($p < .05$), as did the F value for each individual variable when first entered into the model. All analyses of the relationship between predictors and outcome measures were then done by analyzing the beta weights for each predictor in the model.

Sample Error

Given the final sample size for the questionnaire ($N=489$), the overall error due to sampling is approximately as follows:

For percentages of about 50 = $\pm 5.0\%$

For percentages of 30 or 70 = $\pm 4.7\%$

For percentages of 20 or 80 = $\pm 4.0\%$

For percentages of 10 or 90 = $\pm 3.0\%$

These percentages represent two standard errors; therefore the chances are greater than 95% that the true percentages lie within a range equal to the reported percentage plus or minus the sampling error reported above.

APPENDIX B

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

Newsroom Employee:

The following questionnaire is part of a research project being conducted by a team of researchers from the Department of Communication at Michigan State University, under the sponsorship of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE). This project is designed to assess the attitudes of practicing journalists employed in a variety of newsrooms across the country. The issues of interest in the project include the definition of news, factors both internal and external to the newsroom which influence this definition, the usefulness of current readership research conducted by the newspaper industry, the effects of electronic news processing technology (e.g., CRTs, VDTs) and organizational variables, such as leadership style, communication patterns, and job expectations.

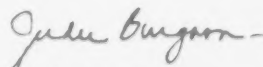
In each newspaper, the entire newsroom staff is asked to participate in this assessment by completing the following questionnaire. As a follow-up to this questionnaire, a limited number of individual, face-to-face interviews will be conducted by the research team. In these interviews, the issues addressed in the questionnaire will be discussed in greater length and depth with the newsroom employee. You are encouraged to answer all the questions in both the questionnaire and interview thoughtfully and honestly, as all your answers will be held in the strictest confidence. No member of the ASNE organization, its research committee, the editors, publishers and reporters of the participating newspaper or anyone except the Michigan State University research staff will see the answers you provide.

If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to raise them with a member of the research team. Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

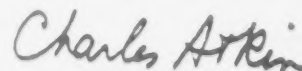
Cordially,



Dr. Michael Burgoon
Professor of Communication



Dr. Judee Burgoon
Associate Professor and
Director of Graduate Studies



Dr. Charles Atkin
Professor of Communication

Newsroom Survey

This survey asks you to make a number of different types of responses. Some questions ask for your feelings about certain issues, while others request that you make a judgment about the way in which your organization or people operate. Frequently you will be asked to make your response using a scale which ranges from 1 to 5 -- for example, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, or from not at all influential to very influential. In these cases, you may circle 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, depending on your opinion. If you are neutral, in-between, or uncertain, you should circle number 3.

Try to answer each question as candidly and accurately as possible. All answers will be strictly confidential. It is important that every question be answered.

1. A central issue we are trying to address is what constitutes news, and how one decides what should be in the newspaper. Briefly, what is your personal working definition of "news"?

2. How has your conception of what constitutes news changed since the time you entered the profession? (circle answer)

NOT AT ALL SLIGHTLY SOMEWHAT VERY MUCH

3. In your day-to-day job, how influential is each of the following on your concept of what is newsworthy? (circle one number for each; 1 = not at all influential, 5 = very influential, or you may choose any number in between).

	NOT AT ALL INFLUENTIAL				VERY INFLUENTIAL
your peers on the staff	1	2	3	4	5
your supervisors	1	2	3	4	5
your friends and acquaintances ...	1	2	3	4	5
your journalistic training	1	2	3	4	5
findings of readership research ..	1	2	3	4	5
news sources	1	2	3	4	5
priorities of network news and prestige newspapers	1	2	3	4	5
local competing news media	1	2	3	4	5

4. To what extent do you think each of the following share your definition of what is newsworthy?

	VERY SIMILAR DEFINITION			VERY DIFFERENT DEFINITION	
reporters on the staff	1	2	3	4	5
supervising editors	1	2	3	4	5
copy editors	1	2	3	4	5
publisher	1	2	3	4	5
readers	1	2	3	4	5
leaders in the community	1	2	3	4	5

5. Below are a series of news topics and types of stories that appear in newspapers. For each one, indicate what priority you think it should receive on a day-to-day basis by assigning a priority rating from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). Then, indicate what priority you think is most prevalent at your newspaper, using the same scale from 1 to 5. Write the numbers in the blanks.

YOUR PRIORITY	PAPER'S PRIORITY	
_____	_____	local news
_____	_____	state news
_____	_____	national news
_____	_____	international news
_____	_____	interpretive background stories
_____	_____	investigative reports
_____	_____	analysis of long-term social trends
_____	_____	breaking news
_____	_____	news already reported by broadcast media
_____	_____	routine government news
_____	_____	service news columns (like Help columns)
_____	_____	news of scandals and corruption
_____	_____	features on people and lifestyles
_____	_____	business and finance coverage

6. Which types of news seem to be given greater play by your newspaper today compared to several years ago?

7. What specific types of stories or topics do you feel your newspaper over-emphasizes and under-emphasizes relative to their news value?

OVER-EMPHASIZED:

a.

b.

c.

d.

UNDER-EMPHASIZED:

a.

b.

c.

d.

8. Earlier we asked about the influences on your personal conception of news. Now we would like to know what factors influence the dominant conception of what is news in your newspaper. Rate each of the following:

	NOT AT ALL INFLUENTIAL				VERY INFLUENTIAL
readers who directly communicate with the paper	1	2	3	4	5
the general readership	1	2	3	4	5
local elected officials	1	2	3	4	5
non-elected community leaders	1	2	3	4	5
reporters	1	2	3	4	5
supervising editors	1	2	3	4	5
your advertising department	1	2	3	4	5
public relations department	1	2	3	4	5
competing local print media	1	2	3	4	5
competing local broadcast media	1	2	3	4	5
national network TV news media	1	2	3	4	5

	NOT AT ALL INFLUENTIAL			VERY INFLUENTIAL	
wire services	1	2	3	4	5
newsmagazines (Time, Newsweek)	1	2	3	4	5
"national newspapers" (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
news sources	1	2	3	4	5
readership committee or ombudsman ...	1	2	3	4	5

9. Below are several attributes often associated with the quality of a news story. How would you rank them? Rank from 1 (highest) to 6 (lowest), with no ties:

RANKING: _____ accuracy
 _____ depth
 _____ impartiality
 _____ investigative enterprise
 _____ literary style
 _____ sophistication of treatment

10. When you judge the editorial quality of a newspaper, how important are each of these attributes? For each one, give a rating score between 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important).

	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT			VERY IMPORTANT	
size of news hole	1	2	3	4	5
high readability of content	1	2	3	4	5
high ratio of news compared to feature stories	1	2	3	4	5
number of political columnists	1	2	3	4	5
diversity of political opinion	1	2	3	4	5
high ratio of staff-written copy com- pared to wire and feature service copy	1	2	3	4	5
attractiveness of layout	1	2	3	4	5
number of journalism prizes won ...	1	2	3	4	5
accuracy of reporting	1	2	3	4	5
amount of in-depth reporting	1	2	3	4	5

11. For each of these statements, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree. If you strongly agree, circle 5; if you strongly disagree, circle 1. You may use any score in between to reflect degree of agreement or disagreement.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE			STRONGLY AGREE		
At this newspaper, breaking news gets more emphasis than reporting of long-range trends.	1	2	3	4	5	
Generally, my newspaper is willing to allocate resources for in-depth analysis.	1	2	3	4	5	
It seems to me that this newspaper is more concerned with today's happenings than with developing a larger perspective on social currents.	1	2	3	4	5	
On the whole, I prefer covering breaking news as opposed to doing in-depth investigatory work.	1	2	3	4	5	
In the future, newspapers will increasingly stress stories with long-term perspectives.	1	2	3	4	5	

12. Below are a number of adjectives and phrases that have been used to describe newspapers. For each pair of words or phrases, please rate your newspaper as you see it:

INACCURATE	1	2	3	4	5	ACCURATE
DOESN'T HAVE THE LATEST NEWS	1	2	3	4	5	HAS THE LATEST NEWS
NOT COURAGEOUS	1	2	3	4	5	COURAGEOUS
IMPERSONAL	1	2	3	4	5	PERSONAL
CAN'T BE TRUSTED	1	2	3	4	5	CAN BE TRUSTED
NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE COMMUNITY'S WELL-BEING	1	2	3	4	5	CONCERNED ABOUT THE COMMUNITY'S WELL-BEING
DOES SENSATIONALIZE	1	2	3	4	5	DOESN'T SENSATIONALIZE
DULL	1	2	3	4	5	LIVELY
NOT RESPECTED	1	2	3	4	5	RESPECTED
DOESN'T ACT AS A COMMUNITY WATCHDOG	1	2	3	4	5	DOES ACT AS A COMMUNITY WATCHDOG

NOT INFLUENTIAL	1	2	3	4	5	INFLUENTIAL
DOESN'T CARE WHAT THE READER THINKS	1	2	3	4	5	DOES CARE WHAT THE READER THINKS
INCOMPETENT	1	2	3	4	5	COMPETENT
DOESN'T REPRESENT THE WHOLE COMMUNITY	1	2	3	4	5	REPRESENTS THE WHOLE COMMUNITY
BIASED	1	2	3	4	5	UNBIASED
UNINTERESTING	1	2	3	4	5	INTERESTING

13. For each of the following statements, please indicate your agreement or disagreement:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE			
The image of our paper is declining.	1	2	3	4	5			
We are making headway in regaining readers' interest and confidence.	1	2	3	4	5			
It is likely that we will lose readers, relative to our population growth, in the next five years.	1	2	3	4	5			
I am optimistic about the future of print journalism in our community.	1	2	3	4	5			
I feel that readers in the future will more and more turn to other media that better meet their needs.	1	2	3	4	5			
I feel this newspaper has been making progressive changes in content and format.	1	2	3	4	5			

14. The next section deals with audience research conducted for or by the newspaper industry.
On the whole, how soon do you find out about newspaper research findings?

- _____ BEFORE ANYONE ELSE
- _____ BEFORE MOST PEOPLE ON THE STAFF
- _____ ABOUT THE TIME EVERYONE ELSE DOES
- _____ AFTER EVERYONE ELSE
- _____ ALMOST NEVER

15. Indicate whether you agree or disagree:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE			STRONGLY AGREE		
I make an effort to stay abreast of current newspaper industry research.	1	2	3	4	5	
In general, my newspaper encourages the dissemination of current research findings among the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	
Findings of current research conducted on the newspaper industry often affect the decisions made in our newsroom.	1	2	3	4	5	
If I were responsible for the budget of my newspaper, I would favor spending more money on research.	1	2	3	4	5	

16. I would characterize newspaper industry audience research as:

INVALID	1	2	3	4	5	VALID
USELESS	1	2	3	4	5	USEFUL
WORTHLESS	1	2	3	4	5	BENEFICIAL
UNNECESSARY	1	2	3	4	5	NECESSARY

17. Have you read or heard about the national Newspaper Readership Project?

NO YES ----- IF YES: Have you seen any of the research reports
from that project?

SEVERAL ONE OR TWO NONE

18. Which of the following publications do you read regularly? (Mark each one
that you read on a regular basis)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| _____ Academic publications (e.g., <u>Journalism Quarterly</u> , <u>Newspaper Research Journal</u>) | |
| _____ Critical reviews (e.g., <u>Columbia Journalism Review</u> , <u>Washington Journalism Review</u>) | |
| _____ Public opinion poll reports in magazines and newspapers (e.g., Harris, Gallup, Yankelovich) | |
| _____ <u>Editor and Publisher</u> | _____ <u>Editor's Exchange</u> |
| _____ <u>ANPA News Research Report</u> | _____ <u>ASNE Bulletin</u> |
| _____ <u>Quill</u> | _____ <u>APME News</u> |
| _____ <u>Presstime</u> | |

19. Newspapers frequently attempt to measure the reading preferences and opinions of the audience. Have any surveys of readers been done for your paper?

YES, SEVERAL YES, ONE OR TWO NO, NEVER NOT SURE

IF YES: Have you ever seen or heard about the findings from such readership surveys?

NO, NEVER YES, ONCE OR TWICE YES, MORE THAN TWICE

IF YES: In what form do you receive readership information?
(Circle all that apply)

WRITTEN FULL-LENGTH REPORTS DISCUSSIONS WITH SUPERVISORS
MEMOS OR BRIEF SUMMARIES CONVERSATIONS WITH CO-WORKERS
RESEARCHERS' ORAL PRESENTATIONS OTHER: _____

20. What do you think is the appropriate use of readership surveys?
(Mark each one)

To help determine what types of stories are newsworthy.....	YES	NO	??
To help decide which features to publish	YES	NO	??
To help plan changes in format and layout	YES	NO	??
To help provide information to advertisers about audience..	YES	NO	??

21. If newspapers were guided by readership surveys in deciding what news to cover, do you think that important news would go uncovered?

NOT AT ALL POSSIBLY PROBABLY DEFINITELY

22. In the last several years, many newsrooms have introduced new technology and word processing equipment (e.g., CRTs, VDTs). This section examines the impact of these new technologies on your work. Has your newspaper introduced electronic news processing technology?

YES, WITHIN PAST TWO YEARS YES, MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO NO

IF NO: Skip to Q. 25

IF YES: Answer the next two questions

23. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about electronic news processing technology:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE			STRONGLY AGREE	
I am satisfied with the way electronic news processing technology is used at this newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5
The training I received in how to use the new technology was adequate.	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable with my ability to operate the new technology that my job requires me to use.	1	2	3	4	5
The presence of new technology has significantly reduced the amount of discussion among reporters and editors.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, the introduction of new technology has made my job more pleasant.	1	2	3	4	5

24. In my opinion, the introduction of electronic news processing technology has proven very beneficial for.....

.... the newspaper overall	1	2	3	4	5
.... me	1	2	3	4	5
.... supervising editors	1	2	3	4	5
.... the reporters	1	2	3	4	5
.... copy editors	1	2	3	4	5
.... the production staff	1	2	3	4	5
.... the readers	1	2	3	4	5

25. The next set of statements relates to your communication with others. Again, indicate whether you agree or disagree.

I rarely discuss news events with non-journalists.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a lot of contact with people in walks of life very different from my own.	1	2	3	4	5
The majority of my friends are associated with the newspaper business in one way or another.	1	2	3	4	5
My co-workers frequently discuss their stories with me.	1	2	3	4	5

	STRONGLY DISAGREE			STRONGLY AGREE		
My editor and I frequently discuss the content of various stories.	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel that discussion of news events is best kept in the office.	1	2	3	4	5	
I regularly seek out the nonjournalists' opinions about the news.	1	2	3	4	5	
I am involved with a variety of groups and people in the community.	1	2	3	4	5	
I think journalists should be involved with community groups and activities.	1	2	3	4	5	
I seek out information from bulletin boards, memos, and other internal communications to find out what's happening at the newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5	
I socialize frequently with other members of the newspaper staff.	1	2	3	4	5	
Nonjournalists often ask my opinion about things in the news.	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel I am tolerant of criticism about how our newspaper covers the news.	1	2	3	4	5	

26. This next section asks about your conceptions of the reading audience for your newspaper. Try to estimate the answers to the following questions:

What proportion of the adults living in the metropolitan area do you think read your newspaper on an average day?

_____ % read paper on average day

What proportion do you think read the paper all five weekdays last week?

_____ % read all five weekdays

For the typical front page hard news article, what proportion of newspaper readers do you think read the whole article?

_____ % read whole article

For the typical front page hard news article, what proportion read just the first few paragraphs but don't go on to finish the article?

_____ % read just the first few paragraphs

How many minutes per day do you think the average reader spends reading your newspaper?

_____ minutes per day

27. We would like you to estimate the proportion of readers who are very interested in each of the following types of news:

PERCENT VERY INTERESTED	TOPIC OF NEWSPAPER ITEM
_____ %	State and local government news
_____ %	General local news
_____ %	International news (wars, diplomacy)
_____ %	National government news
_____ %	Economic news and issues (cost of living, taxes)
_____ %	Crime news
_____ %	Education and schools
_____ %	Accidents and disasters
_____ %	Social problems and protests
_____ %	Science, invention, and space
_____ %	Environment and energy
_____ %	Celebrities and personalities
_____ %	General human interest (non-local)
_____ %	Consumer information and advice
_____ %	Religion
_____ %	Sports
_____ %	Business and finance
_____ %	Fashion, society, food, and home

28. Which subgroups of the population do you think read your newspaper most frequently? In each case, circle the subgroup who reads most heavily. (If you think there is little difference, circle "equal")

Age level	18-29	30-49	50+	EQUAL
Income	Under \$15,000	\$15-25,000	\$25,000+	EQUAL
Race	WHITES	MINORITIES	EQUAL	
Sex	MALES	FEMALES	EQUAL	

Education HIGH SCHOOL SOME COLLEGE COLLEGE GRAD EQUAL

Length of residence
in this city ONE YEAR TWO-TEN YEARS MORE THAN TEN YEARS EQUAL

29. If the readers of your newspaper were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the paper along a scale from 1.0 (very dissatisfied) to 5.0 (very satisfied), what do you think the average score would be? (circle answer)

1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

30. How would the readers rate their satisfaction with the coverage of national and international news?

1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

31. How would they rate their satisfaction with the coverage of local news?

1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

32. Here are some statements about the reading audience in your community. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each item by circling a score from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
The public has more confidence and trust in our newspaper than in television news.	1	2	3	4	5
The majority of newspaper readers are more interested in hard news items than in soft news and features.	1	2	3	4	5
The way the newspaper plays the news influences the public's priorities regarding which issues, leaders, and events are considered most important.	1	2	3	4	5
Most readers prefer to read a few in-depth stories than a number of shorter items.	1	2	3	4	5
People who watch a lot of TV news are less likely to read the newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5
Women less often read hard news coverage than do men.	1	2	3	4	5
"News of record" such as engagements, divorces, and court activities is no longer of high interest to readers.	1	2	3	4	5

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE			
Readers are more interested in the day's breaking news than in analysis of long-term trends.	1	2	3	4	5			
Most readers trust the fairness and accuracy of the news carried in our newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5			
Most readers can't distinguish local enterprise stories from wire-service stories.	1	2	3	4	5			
The majority of readers have little interest in reading about social problems such as racial discrimination and poverty.	1	2	3	4	5			
People read our newspaper because they have no other alternative.	1	2	3	4	5			
Our readers are gullible and easily fooled.	1	2	3	4	5			
Our newspaper has an important impact on the attitudes readers form toward political and social issues.	1	2	3	4	5			
Most readers of the newspaper read the editorial page regularly.	1	2	3	4	5			
The attractiveness of layout and graphics in the newspaper is important to most readers.	1	2	3	4	5			

33. Earlier, you estimated the proportion of the people in your city who read the newspaper on an average weekday. What proportion do you think watch dinner-time network newscasts and local newscasts on television?

_____ % watch any network TV newscasts on average weekday

_____ % watch any local TV newscast on average weekday

34. Here are some items dealing with the newspaper where you work. First, what are the most important jobs in the newsroom, in terms of the quality of the product? Please rank from 1 (highest) to 5 (lowest) with no ties.

- _____ copy editors
- _____ local columnists
- _____ reporters
- _____ staff writers
- _____ supervising editors

35. Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with these statements:

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

STRONGLY
AGREE

My superiors in this newspaper share my values.	1	2	3	4	5
My superiors think like me.	1	2	3	4	5
The readers of this newspaper share my values.	1	2	3	4	5
The readers think like me.	1	2	3	4	5
When I have a problem, I generally seek out my immediate supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5
This paper has a unified editorial approach.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a hard time satisfying the conflicting demands of people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5
There is a difference between the way my supervisor thinks things should be done and the way I think they should be done.	1	2	3	4	5
My supervisor allows me extensive freedom to plan and organize my work.	1	2	3	4	5
The editorial policy of this newspaper usually reflects my views.	1	2	3	4	5
My supervisor insists that I stick to my job and leave decisions and planning to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
My supervisor always insists that I solve my own work problems, but is available to advise me if I should need it.	1	2	3	4	5

36. Listed below are words and phrases that may describe your current job. For each item, either circle Y (for Yes) if it describes your job, N (for No) if it does not describe your job, or ? if you can't decide: (Do both columns)

The work that

I do is.....	Fascinating	Y	N	?	Useful	Y	N	?
	Routine	Y	N	?	Tiresome	Y	N	?
	Satisfying	Y	N	?	Healthful	Y	N	?
	Boring	Y	N	?	Challenging	Y	N	?
	Good	Y	N	?	Important	Y	N	?
	Creative	Y	N	?	Frustrating	Y	N	?
	Respected	Y	N	?	Simple	Y	N	?
	High pressure	Y	N	?	Endless	Y	N	?
	Pleasant	Y	N	?	Gives a sense of accomplishment	Y	N	?

Before having you complete the last section asking about some of your personal characteristics, we would like to stress that all of your responses are strictly confidential. Only members of the Michigan State University research staff will see the answers.

37. What is your sex?

MALE FEMALE

38. What is your age?

UNDER 25 YEARS 25-34 35-44 45-54 55 +

39. How long have you worked in the newspaper industry?

UNDER 3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS 6-10 YEARS 11-20 YEARS OVER 20 YEARS

40. How long have you held your present job?

UNDER 3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS 6-10 YEARS 11-20 YEARS OVER 20 YEARS

41. What hours do you usually work each day?

TIME BEGIN _____ TIME END _____

42. What is your present job title? (Circle one)

REPORTER	PUBLISHER/EXEC EDITOR/MANAGING EDITOR/EDITOR
COPY EDITOR	SUPERVISING EDITOR (SECTION/ASSISTANT EDITOR)
COLUMNIST/ STAFF WRITER	OTHER _____

43. What was the highest academic degree you have received?

HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	M.A. OR M.S.
SOME COLLEGE OR A.A.	PH.D.
B.A. OR B.S.	

44. If you attended college, how large was the institution you received your highest degree from?

UNDER 15,000 15,000-25,000 OVER 25,000

45. IF YOU HAVE A JOURNALISM DEGREE: What was your area of emphasis?

REPORTING/NEWS/EDITORIAL

PHOTOJOURNALISM

ADVERTISING/PUBLIC RELATIONS

MASS COMMUNICATION

BROADCAST JOURNALISM

OTHER _____

46: IF YOU HAVE A NON-JOURNALISM DEGREE: In what area did you major?

ENGLISH

LIBERAL ARTS/HUMANITIES

OTHER: _____

SOCIAL SCIENCES

BUSINESS

NATURAL SCIENCES

TECHNICAL

47. In terms of its adequacy in preparing you for newspaper work, how valuable was your academic training?

VERY WORTHLESS 1 2 3 4 5 VERY VALUABLE

48. Would you like additional training in journalism, new electronic media, or other subjects?

NO YES ----- IF YES: What type of training would you want?

From what persons or institutions would you like to receive this training? (Please, no abbreviations)

49. Have you been promoted in the last two years?

NO

YES, ONCE

YES, MORE THAN ONCE

50. Have you received a merit raise in the last two years?

NO

YES, ONCE

YES, MORE THAN ONCE

51. Have you received any formal evaluation in the past year?

NO

YES ----- IF YES: How were you rated?

VERY NEGATIVELY 1 2 3 4 5 VERY POSITIVELY

52. How thoroughly do you read your newspaper each day?

READ ALL OF IT READ MOST OF IT IN BETWEEN READ SOME READ NONE

53. Which newspapers other than your own do you read regularly? (Please list)

54. How many days a week do you watch the network newscasts on TV?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DAYS

55. How many days a week do you watch local newscasts on TV?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DAYS

56. How many different magazines do you read at least once a month?

_____ MAGAZINES

57. Please list the magazines that you read regularly:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

APPENDIX C

PERSONAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. We would like to begin by focusing on your personal definition of what is news. What makes a story newsworthy to you... which characteristics of an event or a development give it high news value?
2. SHOW PERSON THE LEAD STORY FROM THE DAY'S NEWSPAPER AND ASK: How newsworthy is this particular story? Why?
3. GIVE PERSON CARDS CARRYING FIVE STORIES FROM THE A-SECTION OF YESTERDAY'S PAPER AND INSTRUCT THEM: Please rank order these stories in terms of the degree to which each is newsworthy in your personal view.

A _____ B _____ C _____ D _____ E _____

4. Using your rankings as a starting point, we would like to delve more into what makes some stories newsworthy and others not. Since stories typically report on the who, what, when, where, and why of an event, we'd like to use this framework.

First, the who in a story... What makes the people in these five stories newsworthy? In general which people should get the most play in your newspaper (e.g., certain office-holders, business executives, local leaders, personalities)?

5. Second, what topics are important to cover... What makes these stories in particular worth covering? Generally speaking, which specific topics do you think are the most important to cover in the newspaper?

PROBE: How important are novelty and unexpectedness?

PROBE: Do features belong in the paper? IF YES: To what extent?

PROBE: How newsworthy are press conferences, press releases, and events staged specifically to attract news coverage? Why?

PROBE: To what extent do you feel your newspaper should stress items providing information the public ought to know versus items that the public wants to read?

PROBE: Do you perceive that the number of hard news stories in your newspaper has been increasing or decreasing over the past few years?
IF YES: Why do you think this has occurred? How do you feel about it?

6. Third, when... how important is the immediacy or timeliness of an event?

PROBE: After how long does a story become stale? For example, if a story broke right after yesterday's deadline, how prominently should that story be treated in today's paper?

PROBE: Compared to breaking news, how newsworthy are articles that analyze long-term trends and provide in-depth perspective?

7. Fourth, where... which datelines are most newsworthy? Is local news more important to cover than national news? Why?

PROBE: What should be the relative priority of news from the rest of the state?

PROBE: What types of news from foreign countries are most important to cover? Why?

8. Finally, why... to what extent is the explanation behind an event important? Should a news story stress background interpretation or concentrate on reporting details of an event itself?

PROBE: Should readers be told explicitly why an event is important?

9. On a day-to-day basis, how are decisions at your paper actually made about high versus low priority news items? Who decides which topics actually merit coverage?
10. To what extent are decisions in assigning priority influenced by these factors:
- The agenda set by the wire services?
 - Ideas that are generated by reporters?
 - Ideas that flow down to reporters?
 - Initiatives from the public at large?
 - Local leaders who direct attention to certain issues?
 - Daily staff meetings?
 - Findings from readership surveys?

PROBE: Do you think the newspaper's decision-making is primarily reactive (in the sense of decision-makers responding to events carried on the wire or police blotter items in publicity releases) or proactive (where news personnel take the initiative in digging up stories)?

11. (STAFF) When you are writing (editing) stories, who are you writing (editing) for... what target audiences do you have in mind... your peers, your sources, your superiors, the average reader, or who?
12. To what extent does the nature of beat assignments structure what is news?
13. How much discussion takes place in the newsroom about what should and should not be investigated or reported? PROBE: Are the decisions made in editorial meetings-- about what goes in the paper and where it is played-- explained to the staff?

14. (Asked of half the sample)
Does your newspaper have a policy that defines what is newsworthy?
(STAFF) How is that policy communicated to you?
(MANAGERS) What steps have been taken to articulate the paper's definition of news? Has this been effective
15. How much feedback do you receive from readers? To what extent does it affect news decisions and assignments?
16. How great an influence does the editor have on deciding what is news on a day-to-day basis?
17. There are several kinds of editors in the newspaper business. One kind of editor tries to exert great influence on the staff and takes an active role in daily decision-making, while another kind might play a more passive role as a coordinator or facilitator. How much effect can a single editor with strong views have on what appears on a day-to-day basis in the newspaper? Why?

PROBE: (STAFF) For which type of editor could you work most effectively? Why?
18. (Asked of half the sample)
At the time you obtained your formal education, did you develop a clear definition of what is newsworthy?

PROBE: Was this a journalism education?

PROBE: What were some of the key concepts of this definition?
19. (Asked of half the sample)
In the questionnaire, we asked whether your definition of news is shared by others. How much consensus is there among personnel at the newspaper regarding newsworthy stories?

PROBE: (STAFF) Are there any areas that you think are news that people in management discourage you from covering?
20. Much concern has been expressed by the newspaper industry about the substantial number of nonreaders and drop-outs who stop reading the newspaper. What do you think the main factors are that are responsible for nonreadership?

PROBE: Are people turned off by the newspaper or the news itself?
21. Do you feel there are some audience segments in your area that are not being served adequately by the newspaper? What can be done to better serve them?
22. Which audiences are best served by the newspaper? Why?
23. Which parts of your newspaper do you think the readers are most satisfied with? Least satisfied? Why?

PROBE: (MANAGERS) Do you believe your staff has a good feel for your readers?

24. (Asked of half the sample)
In the questionnaire, we asked you your opinions on the use of VDTs and other electronic data processing equipment in your newsroom. What do you like and dislike about it? Why?
- PROBE: What effect, if any, does it have on news gathering and decision-making?
25. (Asked of half the sample)
To what extent do you think the newspaper influences public opinion on local issues? Is this impact primarily due to news stories or editorial commentary?
26. (Asked of half the sample)
In what ways has television news affected newspapers... Has the timeliness of a story become less crucial in deciding whether to cover it?
27. (Asked of half the sample)
Has television news made the public more accustomed to briefer news stories, so they prefer news-in-brief rather than deeper coverage... or do people now go to newspapers to get extra detail and depth?
28. (Asked of half the sample)
Is TV, either news or entertainment, responsible for the decline in newspaper readership?
29. (Asked of half the sample)
Do you think the public trusts newspaper news more or less than television news? Why?
30. (Asked of half the sample)
Occasionally, there is unfavorable publicity in the news media about journalism, such as evidence of fabricated stories, complaints of news coverage bias, or controversies regarding pre-trial publicity. Do you feel such stories are newsworthy?
- PROBE: Are these stories given the appropriate amount of play?
- PROBE: Do you think such publicity affects the public's attitudes toward journalists? How?
31. (Asked of half the sample)
Next we have some questions about readership surveys. Have you seen or heard about findings from these surveys? IF YES: Did you find the information understandable?
32. (Asked of half the sample)
What do you see as the problems and pitfalls of relying on readership surveys?
33. (Asked of half the sample)
How do you think the results of these surveys affect decisions made at your newspaper? Should they influence them to a greater extent?

34. Does your newspaper have a readership committee? IF YES: What does it do? What role does it play in determining what gets printed?
35. We have covered a number of issues related to what is news and what affects news coverage. Is there anything that we haven't asked you that you think we should know?